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THE INCARNATION

AS A MOTIVE POWER

SERMONS

BY

WILLIAM BRIGHT, D.D.

CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY

HONORARY CANON OF CUMBRAE

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TO THE VENERABLE
EDWARD BARBER, M.A.,
ARCHDEACON AND CANON OF CHESTER,
IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE
OF A FRIENDSHIP OF TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS.

P R E F A C E .

THE contents of the following pages have been addressed, in substance, to various congregations during the last fifteen years, with the exception of the twenty-seventh sermon, which was preached at a Cuddesdon College festival in the first year of Bishop Mackarness's episcopate, and published soon afterwards 'at his desire, almost exactly as now reprinted. It may be as well to explain that some of the sermons were prepared for services at which it was usual for the preacher to be brief.

Such unity of purpose as the series may be found to possess is sufficiently indicated on the title-page ; but a few words may here be added in the way of further illustration.

That quickened sense of interdependence, cohesion, and reciprocal action, which has made " the

unity of nature" a familiar phrase, and "dualism" a word of ill omen, has its correlative in the domain of religious thought. For some time past, Churchmen have been, as it were, learning over again the lesson which St. Athanasius, pre-eminently among the Fathers, taught by the majestic equableness with which he handled the great theological problems of his own time,—the lesson that to isolate any piece of revealed truth from the rest, to look only at this or that aspect of the "wisdom" which is "manifold" while it is one, is the sure way to confusion, if not to heresy. In proportion as Christian students apprehend this momentous principle, they will be the more keenly sensitive as to false antitheses, however clean-cut and epigrammatic, between faith and reason, doctrine and life, Scripture and the Church, spirit and form, the outward and the inward, corporate authority and individual responsibility. They will recognise the reality of "prevenient" or originative grace, and of the response which is made, under its influence, by the will; will see that sacramental

ordinances are not a barrier between God and the soul, but an appointed organ of Divine communications, in which the “efficient cause” is the Holy Spirit; will find the Eucharist, especially, accounted for by the Incarnation, and the Incarnation brought home and appropriated in the Eucharist; will understand that the baptismal infusion of spiritual life involves the necessity of its subsequent expansion or reinforcement; will admit that a ministerial priesthood is intelligible as the representation and expression of the High-priesthood of Christ on the one hand, and of the priesthood of Christians on the other. They will assert, without exaggeration, the “self-emptying” which consisted in the adoption of a human sphere of being by One who continued to “exist in the form of God;” will treat the evidence from His “mighty works” as dependent on the witness of His Person and character; will discern in His atoning Death not an arbitrary transference of penalty, nor a simple announcement of forgiveness, but the twofold operation, through a Divine and human

self-sacrifice, of that perfect love and perfect righteousness which abide indivisibly in the Father and in the Son. While they rejoice in any removal of the stumbling-block which so many souls have found in the association of Christianity with Calvinism, they will be on their guard against such a reaction from an exclusive contemplation of the sterner side of truth as would dispense with the motive of religious fear, and explain away that "holy hatred of sin" which is inseparable from the Divine moral government. And they will acknowledge that the infinity of a true God must be capable of self-limitation, and that the relation of the Maker to the universe must be a relation alike of "immanence" and of "transcendence," even as wherever, throughout His creation, moral agency exists, the freedom implied by it will be respected by His Sovereignty. In short, as confessing a Christ who is God and Man, and worshipping One God, yet One "in Trinity,"—may we not add, as holding to that true Theism which has its security in the Catholic faith?—they will

be habituated to the idea of spiritual correspondences which are often too vast and profound for the methods of logical adjustment, and must needs present themselves, to our faculties, in parallelism.

Moreover, in God's good providence, the modern developments of unbelief have been overruled to bring home to us the relation which exists between specifically Christian doctrine and primary religious ideas. The question of a supernatural Christ is seen to run up into the question of a living, moral, and self-revealing God, and this, again, into the question of a spiritual personality in man. The abandonment of Christianity is found to be, in effect, the attenuation of Theism: the assumptions which put the Gospel story out of court stand evidently on a postulate which would deny that the Supreme was "Master in His own house," and was therefore capable of manifesting Himself by communications which the human mind by itself could not anticipate, and of controlling physical forces by the intro-

duction of a superior force for moral and spiritual ends,—in a word, by revelation and by miracle. There is assuredly no antecedent objection to the Resurrection,—nor, therefore, to any other of the miracles ascribed to Christ,—which would leave unassailed the belief in “a free God :” and those who can believe that the Divine “freedom and love” may be jointly exhibited in what we call the supernatural,¹ are well on their way to the feet of the world’s Redeemer. On the other hand, if these Divine attributes are only admitted in some half-hearted and hypothetical fashion, or are scornfully set aside as “anthropomorphic,” the sense of a free human personality is all the less likely to hold out against the relentless pressure of determinism or materialism.

For us, then, of this day, it is not only a duty specially urgent, but a duty which should be specially natural, to keep in mind the very direct bearings of Christian and Catholic doctrine on the formation of character and the sustenta-

¹ See Pressensé, *Jésus-Christ*, p. 34.

tion of moral life ; to listen for ourselves, and to call upon others to listen to what the Incarnation in its several stages, and in the several media of its continuous activity, can say on the supreme practical question, How is man to draw nearer to God ? what will help him to become purer, truer, better ? There are many who, with a genuine wish to secure the “ethical power” of Christianity, imagine that they can lighten the labouring vessel by throwing the “mystic dogmas” overboard. They may profit by the invitation to consider whether the ethical power would have been, or would now be, what it has been and what it is, apart from a belief in a Divine Christ,¹ and in what He has done, and is

¹ “A Christianity without Christ is no Christianity ; and a Christ not Divine is one other than the Christ on whom the souls of Christians have habitually fed.” Mr. Gladstone, in “Nineteenth Century” for May, 1888. Psilanthropism, miscalled Unitarianism, has never been able to sustain an effective Christian life ; and it is manifestly incapable of justifying that “absolute sovereignty of Christ over the moral and spiritual life” of the Apostolic writers, in which, rather than in “proof-texts,” consists the evidence for their belief in His Divinity. See Dale on the Atonement, p. 24.

doing, for His disciples, servants, worshippers ; whether the moral and spiritual “ fruits ” of that which is, in fact, the only possible and *working* religion have had any other “ root ” than the “ theology which welcomed the presence of the Eternal Beauty, the Eternal Sanctity, and the Eternal Love, the Sacrifice and Reconciliation of the world.”¹ In proportion as men come to see that the august phenomenon of Christian goodness is best accounted for by the presence of a re-creating energy, by the infusion of what Scripture describes as a Divine “ life,” they will acknowledge a *raison d’être* for the affirmations of Catholic Christianity, and a real appropriate-

¹ Dean Church, in “ Masters in English Theology,” p. 90. The familiar image used in the text is employed by him in “ Gifts of Civilisation,” etc., p. 343, as by other defenders of the Christian position, and also by one who, himself a disbeliever, has plainly affirmed that “ theology is essential to a religion capable of acting as such,” and that “ to expect to keep the morality of Christianity, while we deny the truth of the Christian theology, is like expecting to cut down the tree and keep the fruit,”—although, he adds in effect, a de-Christianised society will have a morality sufficient for its own purposes. See “ Nineteenth Century,” June, 1884.

ness in the prayer of the Mediator that believers might be "sanctified in the truth."

Yet further, the Incarnation should be exhibited as a safeguard against a narrow and conventional estimate of Christian duty and virtue. The proposition upheld of old against the Apollinarians, that Christ "assumed the whole of that nature which He came to redeem," may be used to represent the interest which, as Son of Man, He takes in all our life as such—*nihil humani a se alienum putans*. As the natural world is under God's ordering, and its laws, being His, are sacred, so the Christian will seek to bring every part of his week-day conduct "into captivity to the obedience of Christ," and to "do all things" in the one all-sanctifying Name. He will not forget that as the soul is greater than the body, so the spiritual order of life transcends the physical and the secular, and forms an interior circle pervaded by a special Divine presence; but his behaviour will be a permanent witness for the solidarity of all true work, as seen from the standpoint of obedience to that Master who

is to be found and served in "whatsoever things are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report,"—in all that is morally matter of "praise."

And if the faith must be thus presented in order that serious inquirers may do it justice, those who hold it "without doubt" may yet need to be reminded of their responsibilities in reference to what, if held, must claim so much dominion over conduct. To accept it mentally, and not endeavour to assimilate it practically,—to neglect such a store of "moral dynamic,"¹ of motive, impulse, inspiration for good effort, so much that can warm and stimulate, enkindle,

¹ Principal Shairp, *Studies in Poetry and Philosophy*, p. 364. In the same essay he shows in some detail how "those who have most laid to heart, and lived by, the more transcendent doctrines of Christianity, have found in the Atonement . . . the lifting off the whole load of guilt," in the Atonement with the Resurrection "the assurance that God sympathizes with, and will help, the faintest desire to be better," and "in the promise of the indwelling Spirit, and its fulfilment, a surety that the impulse which Christ first gave will not fail nor grow old, but will overcome all obstacles and outlast time. One great practical result of these truths is the animating confidence they give that 'God is for us,'" etc. *Ibid.* p. 378.

direct, support, and reclaim, so much that can be linked, as by a Pauline “therefore,” to resolutions that lift both heart and will upwards,—to gaze at the revelation of the love of Christ, and in no sense to be “constrained” by it,—this is, indeed, to “keep down the truth,” and to defeat its purpose as a power unto salvation. Every one, on the contrary, who, in however limited a sphere, tries honestly to correspond with grace, and to “live in the faith of the Son of God,”¹—whose creed is thus vitalised by consistent action, and brought to bear on daily requirements, or difficulties, or temptations, is, without knowing it, a persuasive apologist for Christianity, a token of its strengthening and purifying efficacy, and a living answer to the cavil that its professors are encouraged to put belief in place of morality.

But it has often been said, and cannot be said too often, that Christianity is concentrated in Christ. All its doctrines point to His Person, and cannot be duly estimated except in the

¹ The ἐν πίστει of Gal. ii. 20 is significant.

spirit of loyalty to Himself. "What it teaches" about Him and His work "it teaches not in the abstract, but as holding forth Him whose steps we are to follow, in whom our whole trust is to be reposed, with whom we are to be vitally incorporated, and whom, accordingly, we must needs know, even though 'in a glass darkly,' through forms of doctrine which have proved their right to express the convictions of Christendom. "The Church's demand is the demand for our conforming to a new law of heart and life, which new law (as she says) can only take effect under the influence of the faith, and of the agency which it provides;"¹ and that faith rests upon a personal Redeemer, and that agency is recognised as, in the deepest sense, His own. Christian morality, which consists in doing what Christ has bidden, cannot but be grounded on the doctrine which tells us who Christ is. And thus throughout all Christian ages, "the essence

¹ Gladstone, "Gleanings," ii. 32; from a paper on Blanco White, written in 1845. Comp. *ibid.* iii. 121, "It was the doctrine of the Incarnation which gave to love, as a practical power, its place in religion."

of Christian life is the absolute devotion of the soul to the Person of” its “Divine and human Saviour;”¹ so that for the purposes of a belief which is to be not barren but fruitful, not otiose but operative, not dead but living, “the Incarnation” will mean *the Incarnate*.

CHRIST CHURCH,
June 1, 1889.

In this edition a sermon has been added, which was preached on the Sunday after the death of Dr. Liddon.

CHRIST CHURCH,
March 18, 1891.

¹ Wace, in “Good Words” for 1878, p. 683, in an admirable paper on “the practical importance of the controversy of St. Athanasius with Arianism.” Dr. Wace shows that the question then raised, “What think ye of Christ?” was “practical, personal, moral, and devotional,” and involved “the very substance of Christian life and practice.”

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SERMON I.

PREPARATION FOR CHRISTMAS.

“And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves ; for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.”—JOSH. iii. 5.

WHAT was the original intention of the observance of Advent ? In other words, which coming of Christ was that which the Western Church, in the latter half of the fifth century, resolved to keep specially in mind during the four or five weeks preceding Christmas ?

The answer to this question is not that which, probably, most of us would expect beforehand. We have come to regard Advent chiefly, if not wholly, as a season for meditating on that supreme event which will wind up and consummate the long series of God's dealings with mankind. We understand by our Lord's Advent that which we call His Second Coming. The hymns which we use during this season are, for the most part, stamped with that idea. They speak of “the end of things created ;” they point onwards to the descending form of Him Who “cometh

with clouds ;” they anticipate the adoration which will then acknowledge Him as “high on His eternal throne ;” or they represent to us the solemn thunderous rhythms of that world-famous *Dies Iræ*, which the genius of Scott condensed into three penetrating stanzas—

“That day of wrath, that dreadful day
When heaven and earth shall pass away,—
What power shall be the sinner’s stay?
How shall he meet that dreadful day?”

And there is profit for us in this way of looking at the Advent solemnities ; for the thought of the Last Day, the prospect of judgment, are too often put aside in our daily life. Our habits, the tone of our social world, our aversion for what is austere and overawing, our instinctive tendency to dwell on the gentler aspects of truth and to excuse ourselves from contemplating the sterner, to appropriate religious comforts and avoid religious warnings,—all these influences require a strong corrective. We cannot afford to dispense with what may help us practically to remember that “we must all” stand—must all “be manifested,”¹ set in our true light, exhibited as what we really are—“before the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive the results of the things done through the body.”

¹ 2 Cor. v. 10, *φανερωθῆναι*.

But still, as a matter of history, it was not, properly and primarily, with a view to the Second Advent that Christians began to give a special character of solemnity to the season on which we have so lately entered. In the words of Dr. Pusey,¹ the idea which prompted this observance was that of preparation for the Nativity of the Lord, as for "a special period of grace, when He who was then born of our flesh would be again born in the hearts which looked for Him, that they might live by His life in them." He even speaks as if preparation for Christmas were the "only object" of Advent when first observed. It might be a fuller account of the case to say that men first of all set themselves to contemplate the mystery of the Incarnation, and thus were naturally led on in thought from the First Coming to the Second. They prayed, in the words of an old Collect—one of the very oldest—for Advent, "Stir up, O Lord, we beseech thee, our hearts to prepare the way for Thine only-begotten Son, that by His Advent we may be enabled to serve Thee with purified minds;" or, "Grant that the coming solemnity of our redemption may procure for us assistance in this life, and eternal blessedness in the life to come."² But they went on

¹ *Intro. to Avrillon, Guide for Passing Advent*, pp. vii. xiii.

² *Murator, Lit. Rom. Vet.*, i. 681, 683.

—how could they help it?—they went on to consider the Second Coming as involved in and guaranteed by the First; and so they prayed that “those who were rejoicing in His Coming in the flesh might receive eternal life when He should come a second time in majesty;” or, “that, as they joyfully received the Son of God as their Redeemer, they might see Him with good confidence when He should come as their Judge.”¹

Let us, at present, briefly consider the observance in its original, primary aspect, with reference to the First Coming of our Lord.

We are looking forward to that festival which is certainly the most popular, has been called the “homeliest,”² and is in some respects the most welcome, of all our high days,—the birthday of Jesus Christ, and in Him of our own truest life, of all that is solidly good and precious to us as Christians. A foreign writer has well said, “Although it is now so many centuries old, it is ever afresh hailed with a new joy. We cannot conceive the possibility of its becoming obsolete; it stands at the threshold of the sacred series of festivals, resplendent with everlasting

¹ Muratori, i. 683, 684. The second of these Collects was preserved in the First Reformed Prayer-book, but unfortunately omitted in the Second.

² Liddon, *University Sermons*, i. 201.

youth and beauty.”¹ Once, indeed, it was not old; it began to be kept in the fourth century after Christ, first in the West, then in the East. St. Chrysostom spent much of his fervour and golden eloquence in recommending it to the Church-people of that city where the disciples were first called Christians; he wanted to “make them love it”—so he says—“as earnestly as he himself did;”² but observe also that he described it to them as “the most venerable and awful of all festivals.” Why should he call it awful? Is it not, we might ask, simply a day of childlike gladness, of pure joy, without reserve or qualification? If it is, as a well-known carol calls it, “the royal day that chases gloom,” may we not, when we keep it, abandon ourselves, as it were, to the simple enjoyment of a spiritual sunshine entirely clear of shadow?

No, my brethren, we may not. Assuredly, gloom has no place in true religion; but awe is a different matter, and there is no religious joy without awe. We are forbidden to “feast without fear.” We must not forget for a moment that we are traveling along a perilous path. We cannot, at any step, divest ourselves of our deep-reaching responsibilities. Indeed, as the Epistle to the Hebrews

¹ Van Oosterzee, *Image of Christ*, E. T., p. 139.

² S. Chrys., *de B. Philogonio*, c. 3.

reminds us, the very amplitude and majesty of Gospel privileges only seem to increase the urgency of the responsibilities which they entail. It is because we have come near to the spiritual Sion, and "to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant," that the consequence of refusing to hear so Divine a Speaker must needs be so tremendous. The height reveals a corresponding abyss: in the piercing words of a thoughtful poet, "What maketh heaven, that maketh hell." And have we duly considered the immensity of that gift for which we profess to thank God on Christmas Day? In order to estimate it aright, let us think of a solemn fact in the Divine moral government, which is attested by Scripture, by the entire history of God's dispensations, and, if we will seriously consider, by our own personal experience—that the Presence of God, whenever it is specially brought near to us, brings out into light what we habitually are, and so forms "a centre of attraction or of repulsion."¹ Thus it is that one man is taken, another left. Here a soul is touched and responds; there a soul recoils, as if resenting an interference. This it is of which St. Paul was thinking when he said that his preaching was a savour of life to some, a savour of death to others;² which Symeon indicated

¹ W. H. Mill, *University Sermons*, p. 415.

² 2 Cor. ii. 15.

when, holding the Infant Saviour in his arms, he warned Mary that her Son was "set for the fall" as well as "for the rising of many in Israel,"—that is, that some would turn the very corner-stone into a stumbling-block. This is what is summarised in the solemn declaration that "the coming of the Light into the world" was of itself a process of "judgment;"¹ and for this very reason our Lord repeatedly, in His considerate mercy, "withdrew Himself" from souls not yet disposed to receive Him, and refrained from forcing on them that fuller light which would but have proved to be their deeper condemnation.

All sacred seasons are, then, in their way, "times of visitation," critical periods, opportunities fertile in consequences, if not for good, then for evil; occasions of trial, of exposure, and of judgment. God means them to be seasons of grace; He desires us to be the stronger, better, happier, for having had them. But, in accordance with the requirements of moral responsibility, He leaves us free to say whether it shall be so, or shall it be otherwise. And does not this rule hold good in regard to a festival which celebrates, not the birth of a mere saint, but that stupendous "mystery of love" which we "adore" as the Holy Incarnation? What is it that we believe about the Person

¹ John iii. 19.

of Jesus Christ? Surely this, and nothing less than this: that He is the Divine Son of God, who for our sakes became man. He is not a human person exceptionally sanctified, not a mere man who retained more fully than others the impress of God's moral image, who responded more loyally than others to the summons of the all-perfect will, to the influence of the all-holy Spirit; no, He is Divine in His own Self, in the very root of His personal being, having existed from eternity in the form of God, in the bosom of the Father, as His coeternal and consubstantial Son. And He "was made Man:" as St. Augustine loved to put it,¹ "He continued to be what He was, but became what He had not been;" He entered into the actual sphere of human life and experience, by taking upon Himself, without diminution of His essential Deity, the body and soul which made Him one of us, and subjecting Himself, thus far, to creaturely and earthly limitations; "and that," as the Church says in the Christmas octave, "without spot of sin, to make us clean from all sin." Given this august and inspiring belief, the faith of the Catholic Church from the beginning, we surely see what a solemn thing it is for Christians to keep the human birthday of a Christ who is "Divine" in no unreal and abated sense, but

¹ See his Sermons in *Natali Domini*.

in the entire and thoroughgoing significance of the unmistakable term "Godhead." Grasp this thought well, my brethren, and it will do its own work, it will tell its own story. Remember that in looking, by faith, at the Babe of Bethlehem, you are looking upon your God, self-humbled for your salvation, in compliance with the promptings of an unimpeachable love. What says the hymn which is so dear to us?—

"Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of a Virgin's womb;
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the Incarnate Deity!"

It is, then, the true Deity of Jesus which underlies and explains the anxiety of His Church that her children should train themselves for the due observance of Christmastide, lest through carelessness, which involves irreverence, they should forget the claims which belong to such a Master. To those who accept this sovereign and fundamental truth, it will seem worth while to spend a little time, at any rate, in looking well at it in its various aspects, and accustoming themselves to a regular contemplation of them all.

What, then, shall we do for this purpose? What subjects of thought shall we take up—not as mere

matters of speculation, not as so much exercise of our minds on sacred truth, but with the set purpose of fitting ourselves for the due discharge of a very serious responsibility ?

1. Let me say, in the first place, that, as with other Christian truths, so with this, the chiefest of them, we cannot appreciate as a dogma binding on our acceptance what we have not learned to associate with the needs and the capacities of our own moral and spiritual nature. When we can do this, then the doctrines of our faith commend themselves to our conscience; we gain, as it has been well said, a "practical ground for our belief;"¹ we see that it fits our case, and interprets our life for us; we "know," in a vital way, "whom we have believed;" we have, as St. John expresses it, "the witness in ourselves." Let us, then, look into our souls, and we shall see that a really Divine Christ is the answer to their deepest inward questionings. What do we feel when a consciousness of sin is brought home to us; when we are ill at ease with ourselves, despondent, bewildered, heartsick; when the sunshine of life has been overclouded, or anxieties hang heavy upon us, or pain and sorrow are facts too close at hand? The question then is, "What should we do without the

¹ Wace, *Christianity and Morality*, p. 283.

Christ of the Gospel and of the Church, living, loving, reigning, upholding, interceding, saving to the uttermost?" We know something then of what it is to sit in darkness; our souls go forth to welcome the "great Light," and the angel's message is felt to be "good tidings of great joy."

2. Another point is this: We must surely wish to become better, to make a new start, to turn from darkness to light, from evil to good, from self-will and perverseness to the service that is perfect freedom. If not, why are we here? "What mean we by this service," unless it is that we come to place ourselves under the influences of that Spirit Who is the Comforter or Supporter inasmuch as He is the Purifier; to submit our souls to the treatment of a Divine Physician; to renew our purposes of fidelity; to renew, therefore, our repentance for past unfaithfulness? In that case, the prospect of Christmas should deepen our contrition, strengthen our resolutions, touch our wills with a new moral impulse, and revive in us the hopes which wait upon moral sincerity. After all, whatever we have been, here, by God's mercy, we still live. We can pray, we can confess our sins, we can thank Him for giving us a Saviour, we can claim our part in the inexhaustible consolations and assurances of that Saviour's temporal

Nativity. Let us ask Him, by the virtue of His adorable Incarnation, to make us monuments of its ever-fresh restorative energy, and recipients from that "fulness" of spiritual life which resides perpetually in Himself as the Second Adam. Let us be sure that He desires our salvation, means us nothing but the truest good, is ready to give, as with both hands, the grace which we need to serve Him better for the future. One thing He does indeed require, a condition morally indispensable—and that is, singleness of heart.

3. And this should lead us to a third consideration. What is it which keeps us from being simple, sincere, loyal, in our relation to God and to our own conscience? What is it which overclouds our faith, chills our prayers, paralyses our intentions? Is it not sin tampered with, sin secretly cherished, and, therefore, sin easily besetting? We give up, perhaps, certain wrong things; do we give up all? Do we not keep back something, as if it were too much to expect that we should be unreserved in our surrenders? There is some bit of self-will which we cannot bear to part with, some evil temper, some particular bad habit which we think has, under the circumstances, a good deal to say in its own defence, which, at any rate, has become part of ourselves. While we keep

terms with evil in this form, we are trying to shut out God from some one corner of our souls; and the result is, that we are immersed in what our Lord has branded as hypocrisy. Our heart is divided; our eye is not single; we are false to ourselves. And while this is so, how idle it is to expect that religion can do anything for us, that we can look up, as children should, into the face of a reconciled Father, or offer a true birthday greeting to Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire! My brethren, if we are thus hiding ourselves from the presence of the Lord God, under the trees of a garden which is certainly not a Paradise, let us come out of that baneful shadow at once, and face the light now, while yet there is time for it to fill our souls with its own reanimating splendour. Let us, during this Advent season, very specially implore the Searcher of hearts to purge us clean from all double-mindedness, to make us honest with Him and with our consciences, to stir up and kindle and straighten our wills, that they may be conformed to His goodwill for us, who has so intensely loved us as to send His Son for our redemption, and who calls to us now, with the voice of a Father, to find in that Son our salvation and our peace.

SERMON II.

THE GAINS OF A GOOD
CHRISTMAS.

“But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.”
—ST. LUKE ii. 19.

PROBABLY most of us have an instinctive disposition to put aside, as far as possible, throughout the season of Christmastide all thoughts that vex or disturb. In this sense we perpetuate the idea of “Christmas holidays,” which had for us, in our first school-days, a charm so exceptional, and invested the weeks following upon mid-winter with a tender brightness peculiarly their own. We still say, as it were, to troubles and anxieties, “Wait until Christmas is well over; let us enjoy, without qualification or drawback, the sweetness and fragrance of ‘the most welcome festival of the Church.’”

It is well. But the holy time is drawing to a conclusion; we are approaching that twelfth day which is consecrated to the several and progressive

manifestations of the glory that dwelt in the Word Incarnate ; and, indeed, we have already ceased to use the Christmas collect,—ceased to add to our highest act of thanksgiving the mention of that special reason for praising the Father, that He “gave Jesus Christ, His only Son, to be born as at this time for us.”

Let us, then, consider briefly what should be the lasting gains of a good Christmas ; how we may best retain through the ensuing weeks and months the thoughts which have helped us, the peace which our hearts have felt, the blessings which, as we may trust, we have obtained in and by means of the celebration of our Redeemer’s human birthday ; how, in a word, like His own Blessed Mother, we may “keep these things, and ponder them in our hearts,” combining point with point,¹ and thoughtfully musing on the significance of the whole.

1. For us, who believe with the Church of Christ, the solemnities of Christmas should, of course, have the effect of deepening and consolidating our faith in the great central mystery of the Incarnation. We know in whom we believe when we say, “Who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary : who for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate, . . . and was

¹ Συμβάλλουσα.

made man." It is no other than the Eternal Son of God, He whose Personality has its root in Godhead; whose very Self is interior to the uncreated life; who is "the effulgence of the Father's glory, the exact impress of His substance," or "being;" who can claim the title of "the First and Last;" who is the Maker of all things, Himself unmade; who "in the beginning was with God, and was God;" who, when, in St. Paul's strong phrase, He "emptied Himself" of His glory, could but limit by His own will the exercise of His Divine powers, could not cease to exist "in the form of God" when He put on "the form of a servant,"¹ simply because He could not cease to be Himself; who "became man, yet was still God, having His manhood as an adjunct, perfect in its kind, but dependent upon His Godhead."² Yes, most true;

¹ The "self-emptying," in Phil. ii. 7, must be determined, as to its nature and extent, by the "assumption of the form," or essential character, "of a servant;" for He "emptied Himself" by taking that form upon Him, even as He further "humbled Himself by becoming obedient even unto death." The acceptance of such limitations as were involved in the assumption of humanity, or the acceptance of human conditions of existence, was *pro tanto* a suspension of the manifestation of His Divine glory. The preceding words, it has been suggested, may be understood to mean that He did not use equality with God for His own self-aggrandisement, did not take for Himself the opportunities of His position. He did not, as it were, insist on remaining in the unqualified enjoyment of the prerogatives of His Divine pre-existence.

² Newman, Sermons, vi. 61.

but then observe how Christmas helps us to see this stupendous fact in the light of its Evangelist's sublime definition, "God is Love." The doctrine that God became man is not simply imposed upon us as a dogma, involving intellectual difficulties and making a demand on faith; it is the expression of an immense condescension, and therein of a supreme, incalculable love. A miraculous Christ is "the one central miracle of Divine love:" in accepting Him we take hold of the Infinite Pity. That vast benignity, that unspeakable "philanthropy,"¹ as St. Paul calls it, comes home to us when we think of Bethlehem, and presents the mystery of godliness in the most attractive and persuasive of all aspects. It ought surely to be easier for us to adopt and assimilate, for instance, the language of the Athanasian Creed respecting our Saviour's Person, and the co-existence of Godhead and manhood within the unity of that Person, when we think of our Christmas worship, when we rekindle our Christmas joy. "We believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect Man, yet not two, but one Christ," and this "not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person." And then we bring it home,—"He came down—He, this Divine Son of God,

¹ Titus iii. 4.

stooped to this depth of self-abasement—for love of me, and of such as I am.” The Fatherhood of God,¹ the tenderness, compassion, and goodwill which are of the very essence of Deity in relation to mankind, are illuminated by many facts and many experiences; but by nothing, we may say, more brilliantly than by the Church’s answer to the great question, “What think ye of Christ?” Yes, assuredly, it is the Catholic faith which best calls forth love in response to Love Divine.

2. One other point, out of several which may occur to us, seems especially to fit in with the reflections natural to the first Sunday of a new year. It is well known that the observance of Christmas is not nearly so old as that of Easter; we cannot trace it further than to the fourth century after Christ. A theory has been advanced to explain this comparative inattention of the early Church to such an event as the Nativity. It is said that the first Christians were so absorbed in the thought of redemption and the prospect of resurrection that they did not do full justice to the effect of our Lord’s coming in the flesh in elevating and sanctifying all human life as such. Be this as it may, we, at any rate, may well use the

¹ This phrase has to be vindicated against a popular misuse of it, which tends to disparage the Mediation, and attenuate the sense of sin.

festival of His Birth as representing all that He can do and will do if we ask Him, to render our lives pure and fruitful, consistent, and solidly happy; as concentrating all the lessons which we can derive from His contact with life at all points—from His youthful work in a shop, from His presence at social meals and family festivals, from His acceptance of friendships, from His pity for the suffering and the poor. Christmas will have done us good, my brethren, if it has formed in us some fresh resolution to offer up our life to Him, to place it in His hands, who, as the Second Adam, as Head of His body, the Church, as Fountain of grace, as Life-giver, as Teacher, as Example, can alone effectively help us to make something better of this rich gift of life than we have made of it in past years. Would it not be well if, from this Christmastide, we were to start afresh with new efforts to please Him in daily thoughts, words, and deeds; to ask His blessing on all that we undertake; to avoid, as a pestilence, whatever we know He would condemn; to say at every turn, "Lord, I am Thine: I give Thee my heart; do Thou take care of my soul, keep me from evil, make me what Thou wouldest have me to be;"—in a word, to dedicate ourselves, more consciously, regularly, and affectionately than ever before, to Him who lay in the manger

and died on the Cross, that He might have us as His own to all eternity ?

Let us take home these thoughts, and take care not to lose them. Perhaps they will help us not only to remember this Christmas with thankfulness, but to welcome the next with a fuller preparation of soul. And they will have this effect if we learn that "lesson of the holy manger,"¹ the dignity and momentousness which, in the sphere of grace, are attached to what seems commonplace or trivial. The sign given to the shepherds was of the simplest ; just "a babe," more poorly housed than other infants, in a manger instead of a cradle, because His Mother had had to find shelter in an outhouse. Let us take well to heart this significance of the Holy Nativity. Let us endeavour so to live, in the year that lies before us, that the least impressive surroundings and the most prosaic bits of work may become all radiant with the spiritual glory of Bethlehem, the presence of Him who, being eternally rich, for our sakes, as at this time, became poor.

¹ Liddon, Univ. Sermon. i. 189.

SERMON III.

THE NATURE OF FAITH.

“We walk by faith, not by sight.”—2 COR. v. 7.

ST. PAUL, in this comprehensive saying, is illustrating the relation which Christians, during this earthly life, sustain towards their unseen Lord. He has been emphasising the contrast between things temporal, which are seen, and things eternal, which are unseen, and the obligation which lies upon us to recognise practically the superior importance of what is unseen, although, as he well knows, it will cost a continuous effort. If the outward man decays, the real life of the soul is not compromised, but enhanced; and when the supreme change itself arrives, and the earthly lodging of the spirit is broken up, the spirit passes to a better home, which is, in the fullest sense, a building of God. Nay, even before that event there must be felt a craving for the habitation that is from heaven; not for death in

itself, but for the putting-on of immortality, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life. This consciousness of a glorious future is infused into the soul by God Himself, in that He made us capable of "enjoying Him for ever;" and it may serve as a counteracting force against the influence exerted by the visible world, which virtually seems to assert that it is the only world. The Christian knows that it is not; and one thing which, beyond most others, fortifies him against "secularist" assertions is, that while he is in the body he is, in one sense, absent from the Lord. He is quite sure that Jesus Christ, His Person, His works, His love, His holiness, His discriminating interest in the welfare of every one of His servants,¹ are realities of the highest type, if anything whatever can be called real. And yet he cannot, at present, see his Saviour; and he will not be able to see Him while he is in this world; for we Christians, says the Apostle, in all our relations with the spiritual and eternal world, must dispense with the evidence of our senses, and accept the principle of belief or trust as our informant and our stay. We walk by faith,—by means or help of faith,—not by sight. This is, so to speak, what we bargained for when we became Christians; we knew

¹ See Christian Year: Monday before Easter.

that it must be so. Our religion puts faith in the very foreground; its first word is a *credo*; it imposed upon us, at the outset, the necessity of going beyond the area of sensible experience; its benedictions are for those who have not, in that sense, seen, and yet have, in a vital sense, believed.

How much St. Paul has to say about faith, we all know; it is almost needless to quote passages. We remember how, for him, the Church of Christ is the very household of faith; if you enter it, you breathe faith's very air. It is by faith, he says, that we have "access to grace," that we "stand," that we "live," that we are "justified." The question for us as to the reality of our Christian profession is "whether we are," or are not, "in the faith." In that faith we are to "continue grounded and settled;" by it "Christ is to dwell in our hearts." St. Peter describes faith as a "precious" treasure common to all true Christians, capable of being "tested,"—as a power whereby we are to "resist" our ghostly enemy. St. James insists on conduct which shall be consistent with our possession of faith in "Jesus Christ the Lord of glory." St. John treats faith in Jesus, the Son of God, as the instrument of "victory over the world," over the influences of this visible order of things when set up as against the

spiritual, and of human society in alienation from its Divine and rightful Sovereign. St. Jude regards our "holy faith" as the basis on which our life is to be "built up." Christ's servants are therein simply carrying out the teaching of the Master; in His words, as well as in theirs, the Gospel commits itself decisively, and us, if we accept it, to the principle of faith.

It is true, of course, that faith was also the fundamental principle of Hebrew piety. It was by the power of "realising¹ things hoped for," and finding "a proof of things not seen," that "the elders," as they are called, from Abel downwards, were recognised as righteous; that Abraham especially, and in their way the other patriarchs who took God at His word, and by their acts declared that they "sought a better country" than could be found on earth, were brought into close relation with the unseen Helper and Guide on whose assurance they had staked everything. But how richly was faith developed under the Gospel! Christian faith is to Jewish as the flower to the seed. It retains the same elements. It is distinct, as it ever was, from sight or sensible experi-

¹ Ὑπόστασις has the notion of a groundwork or basis (cp. LXX., Ps. lxxviii. 2), and hence of "substantive" reality. In Heb. xi. 1, by a transfer of meaning, it is applied to that which recognises the reality.

ence,—from the demonstrations which science can give of facts belonging to its area,—from opinion, which falls short of adequate certitude; in other words, it holds fast to truths which cannot be verified by such tests as inform us that this is solid and that is fluid, nor by trains of strictly scientific reasoning; and it regards them not as mere working theories, nor as mere expressions of the devotional sentiment, but as truths “worth living for and dying for.” It relies on what, in some form or other—brought home to it in this way or in that—it regards as Divine testimony, to accept which is to trust God. Is this irrational? Only on the hypothesis of atheism, or of the theory which, if it has not the “terrible courage” to say, “Certainly no God exists,” yet says, “We cannot tell whether He exists or not, and after all it does not practically signify.” Doubtless, faith starts with the conviction that God *is*, that He lives, reigns, observes, provides,—a conviction most persuasively brought home by the thought of our own moral personality; by the sense of moral obligation, not to some law, but to some *One*;¹ by the demand of our affections for a supreme, all-satisfying object,—a conviction which grows into the confidence that such a God as is thus attested would yet further

¹ See Wace's *Christianity and Morality*, pp. 50, 203, ff.

reveal His will and His character: so that from the point of view of a vital theism, no difficulty lies in the idea of such a special revelation;¹ it would lie rather in the thought that no such revelation had been made. Given a living God, and a revelation such as culminates in a Christ is just what was to be expected; and the faith which welcomes the Christ is but filling in the outlines traced by the spiritual experience of those who "without us were not made perfect." But how gloriously are those outlines thus filled in!

It is quite evident, from the whole strain of Scripture language, that faith derives its religious value from the fact that it is not only intellectual, but moral, and belongs to the heart as well as to the head; that it deals with questions which are far enough from being merely speculative, which must needs affect the bent of choice and the drift of conduct; and this is why it cannot be dependent on such evidence as would suit an inquiry devoid of moral interest. Even the simplest and most elementary acts of faith in God, if it is to be higher than that of those who believe and tremble, must involve some wish to get nearer to Him, to stand well with Him,

¹ Newman, *University Sermons*, pp. 195, 239; Liddon, *Advent Sermons*, i. 194.

and therefore, in some sort, a purpose of obeying Him; and those who are not thus, as St. Luke puts it, "disposed towards eternal life,"¹ will say that they see no reason to believe. Faith's reasoning, in fact—we confess it—is swayed by this aspiration of the soul; it involves a "moral sympathy," a religious "preconception" or "presentiment" which seems irrational to those who insist on applying scientific tests to religious questions.² If the longing after an infinite Truth and Goodness has not been awakened, faith cannot act; when it is awakened, she cannot but act somehow, and the Gospel provides her with a proper method of action. Hence, faith is treated in Scripture as a criterion of disposition, and, being thus closely connected with the state of the affections and the will, it is said to "work through love;"³ it always contains an element of religious obedience; it commits the soul to a strife against sin, to a choice of God's will, to a practical recognition of Christ, both as Saviour and as Master; and it is exactly on this ground that St. Paul describes it as the principle of our justification, as placing us in an acceptable position before God.

¹ Acts xiii. 48.

² Newman, Sermons, ii. 19; Liddon, University Sermons, ii. 216; Mozley, Lectures, p. 280, ff.

³ Gal. v. 6.

To bring this to a practical conclusion: Are we sincere in adopting for ourselves the momentous petition of the Apostles, and asking the Lord to "increase our faith"? Do we feel that, at best, we have need also to say, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief"? Do we desire to bring our constant repetitions of the Creed into effective relation with whatever is truest and deepest in our whole nature? Should we be honestly glad if we could secure a real share in the victory that overcometh the world,—could believe, as a collect says, "perfectly" and profoundly, by the united action of all our powers, mental and spiritual, not only in Christianity as the truth, but in Christ as the True One, so that "the vague, shoreless universe might become for us a firm city, and a dwelling which we know,"¹ because we know its Lord as our own Lord? Then let us take the course which He marked out for us, when He made obedience the condition of such loyalty as He would accept, and likened mere inactive profession to a fool's house built upon the sand. Let us strive each day to make our thoughts, words, and acts such as we know that He would be able to approve. So, according to His own assurance, by seriously endeavouring to "do" His will

¹ Carlyle, *French Revolution*, i. 12, on "the virtue that lies in belief." He adds, "Well might men prize their *Credo*."

and the Father's, we shall "know," as no arguments could teach us, that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, the infallible Guide and rightful King of souls, to follow whom is "not to walk in darkness, but to have the light of life." We shall "know," in short, by "following on to know the Lord;" we shall be walking by faith; and faith, in the words of a great writer, is "not an isolated act of human knowledge, feeling, or will, but a complex action, something only consummated through the co-operation of all the powers of the soul,"¹ so that by it the whole man commits himself effectually to God, and makes his "I believe" a confession tending to salvation.²

¹ Döllinger, *First Age of the Church*, E. T., p. 190. Compare Liddon, *Easter Sermon*, i. 81.

² Rom. x. 10.

SERMON IV.

THE STEPS OF FAITH.

“Ye believe in God, believe also in Me.”—ST. JOHN xiv. 1.

OUR Lord here tells us that His religion addresses itself to those who acknowledge a real and living God. This is the first lesson taught in the school of religious knowledge. When it has been learned, Christianity can lead on the pupil's mind to a full conviction of the truths depending on it. But men must, in some sense, know the Father before they can recognise and accept the Son.

“Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord.”¹ This creed of the ancient revelation, professed by all Israelites to this day at the most solemn moments of life, including the very last moment, is developed by Christian teaching into the doctrine of the Undivided Trinity. But it retains unchanged its original character; it is emphasised in the language of the Church when she is actually avowing her Trinita-

¹ Deut. vi. 4.

rianism: "We worship one God," but a God who exists in Trinity." The confession of "one God, one Lord," precedes the confession of "three Persons in one substance." The question before the early Christian thinkers was that of combining with this primeval affirmation of Divine unity the specifically Christian propositions that there is a Son of God, and that this Son is Himself really Divine.

It is often useful for us to look to the rock whence our Creed is hewn, to scan the foundations of the house of our faith. It is more than useful, it is inevitably necessary; for we are constantly challenged on the subject, and if we "give an answer, with meekness and fear," we may hope to gain a firmer hold on the primary truths, and to appreciate more worthily the truths derived from them. Let us dare, then, to go back to the beginning, "I believe in God."

The word, it has been well said, is in itself a theology. The heathen had gods many, and lords many; and one great heresy of the old time represented the long survival of Pagan notions about greater and lesser deities, while the Church's resistance was a safeguard of the Divine idea in its purity and its singleness.¹ But some, who have not the excuse of

¹ As to "the Arian idea of a created divinity," see Mozley, on Development, p. 78.

confusedness caused by paganism, have borrowed the "glorious and fearful Name" to deck out the conceptions of an unconscious First Cause, or a soul of the world, or an underlying force, or law, or movement, sustaining the physical or the moral order. We may hope that sometimes the Name, even thus used, exerts its power over the speaker's mind, so as to prepare him to recognise its true import. But, as yet, such a person is not genuinely a believer in God.

We mean by the word¹ a single, eternal, self-dependent Spirit, possessing in fulness the attributes which we call personal, self-consciousness and will; all-powerful, all-wise, all-good; the Originator, Upholder, and absolute Lord of the whole universe; the moral Ruler and merciful Father of men, the observant Judge of their actions, the End for which their souls exist, and in which alone they can attain their consummation. If we mean anything by God, we cannot mean less than this. True, we are far indeed from being able to measure the ideas thus indicated; on the contrary, we feel that we are touching on mysteries which we cannot penetrate, when we think of an existence which had literally no beginning, or of a Creator present throughout His works, yet not

¹ See the noble passage in Cardinal Newman's *Lectures on University Education*, p. 91, ff.

contained within the sum of them. But the thought of God exists, and commands attention. Its very magnificence is of itself a recommendation. There it lies at the bottom of our minds—

“The ultimate,
The ground o’er which all other notions pass.”

For when we ask, “Why do I believe in God?” we do not give the fullest answer by saying that the universe suggests an intelligent Author, a primal Mind which planned it, and a Power which started it on its course, and which must still be supposed to energise in its motion, and that this Mind and Power are best called “God.” Considerations derived from the physical universe have their force, as St. Paul says; but he does not say that of themselves they prove the existence of a moral God, only that they throw light on what “may be known” about Him,¹ and this in dependence on other reasons which go deeper and rise higher. And where are these to be found? In ourselves, always supposing that we believe in our own personality, as spiritual and moral beings. If, in this sense, we believe in man, it is but consistent to believe in God. All turns on that point, Do we believe that we have souls? If so, what is the soul’s testimony?

We are sure that we—not merely our bodies, but *we*

¹ Rom. i. 19, 20.

—exist with a continuity of “self,” so that each of us can say, “I am.” But this consciousness of a personality which is real and yet finite leads up to a Personality on which our own is dependent, but which is not limited like our own.¹ We are spirits, and so we think of a sovereign Spirit as having called us into being, and as presiding over the life which He only could have bestowed. Again, if we listen to the voice within us, we hear it say, “I can.” I have power to act, and can resolve to act; I am sure that, in some true sense, I possess a free will; and this points to a supreme Will and Power from which my capacity, such as it is, proceeds. Once more, the momentous confession proceeds, “I ought.” I am bound to do right and not wrong; I am under a law of duty, which I did not make and cannot set aside. I have a conscience which speaks to me in personal tones, as if in the name of a moral arbiter; and to resolve it into a mere sum of social instincts would be to violate my sense of a responsibility which cannot be ignored.² And yet once more, our affections

¹ It has been well observed that “God’s personality transcends ours” in the sense of being more complete than it, of being its archetype: and that His “infinity” consists in His not being “limited” save by His own act.

² See Travers Smith, *Man’s Knowledge of Man and of God*, p. 161, ff.

speak from the depths of our nature, "I need." I want a supreme object for love and trust, for the sense of dependence, the capacity of devotion. "The heart has reasons of its own," says Pascal.¹ It "knows its bitterness," but it knows its aspirations; it cannot believe that they were given for nought; it cries out instinctively, not for something, but for Some One who alone can satisfy its "profound, insatiate need."² This experience is the basis of Augustine's declaration, so full at once of sublimity and of pathos, "Thou, Lord, hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it finds rest in Thee."³

This witness of the soul for God is reinforced from what we know of human love, human faithfulness, human purity, which lift our thoughts to a perfect Goodness of which they are but dim reflections; from the mysteriousness of this life, as requiring a God and a better world to explain its "whence" and "whither," to correct its anomalies, and to heal its griefs; from the heaped-up stores of spiritual experience, to which we ourselves may contribute enough for a deep, im-

¹ *Pensées*, ed. Molinier, ii. 140.

² "Man needs some faith. Profound, insatiate need!

No vice can stifle, fortune supersede,
Folly forget it, literature console,
Nor unbelief dissemble from the soul."

Moile's State Trials.

³ Confess. i. 1.

pregnable conviction, that if this or that is perplexingly dark, "there are dealings with us—there are dealings!"¹

But if there is a living and reigning God, Almighty, righteous, and benignant, He surely would not leave us without further tokens of His presence and will than nature of itself can exhibit; for there is a side of nature which, as has often been said, seems rather to conceal than to reveal Him. And what we do see creates an imperious desire of seeing more; and the news that more has been shown, that He has intervened and come nearer to us, is not intrinsically improbable, but the reverse. The difficulty would be in believing that He had *not* thus pitied us and helped us. And thus we are led to anticipate what we call specifically a revelation; and there can be no question of any revelation save that which is concentrated in the Person of Jesus Christ.² "The only begotten Son, He hath interpreted the Father." And by Christ we mean the historical Christ of the Gospels, whose character is in a most true sense its own evidence,³ whom the Church throughout the world

¹ See "Silas Marner," p. 126.

² "One thing is certain: nothing can take the place of Christianity. . . . It is idle to speak of substitutes which mock our common sense." Dean Church, *Human Life and its Conditions*, p. 79; cp. *ibid.*, p. 160.

³ "The contemplation of our Lord's character, as carrying with

adores as the Word Incarnate; and under His Name we include the religion which is gathered up in Him,—the Church, which is His kingdom in this world, the doctrines which exhibit so many aspects of His Person and work, the ordinances which are organs of communication with Him, the moral teaching which expands His recorded precepts, and claims obedience on the ground of loyalty to Him; and the type of character,—that unique thing, that luminous heart-uplifting fact, which Christian life, with its motives, aims, activities, its prayers and labours and sufferings, has set up as the result of “His image imprinted in the minds of His subjects individually.”¹ In spite of all disappointments and drawbacks, of earthen vessels, and blemished copies, and ideals not realised, and “ill in the heart of good,” this spiritual creation forms an atmosphere within which we can breathe freely, while we confess the faith which is its one life-principle. But for Him, it would not exist. Conceive it gone, and what would life be without it? Let those who can, believe that the best fruits ever put forth by the tree of humanity were grown, as it were, on false pretences, were fostered by a mere

it its own evidence . . . is the point to which, after all and in fact, all religious minds tend, and in which they ultimately rest.”

Newman, *Discussions and Arguments*, p. 367. Cp. St. John x. 33.

¹ Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, p. 458.

superstitious figment. For us, the fact of Christian holiness is a living witness to Christ as the Holy One.

Thus from belief in the soul's true existence we are led on to the acceptance of Christ as its true Lord. It matters little whether we trace the steps of faith in this sequence, or whether, reversing it, we begin with the Christian religion and Church, and work backwards. Practically, we are most likely to take this latter course, because the first question raised is, "Why are you a Christian?" But the former course has this advantage, that it helps us to see how Christian faith reacts on those convictions which it presupposes, and especially how it illuminates, enriches, consolidates—we may well say, secures—the primary idea of all religion. Belief in God warrants belief in Christ; and belief in Christ intensifies belief in God. The second article of the Creed would have no standing-ground without the first; but we appreciate the first more truly, and cling to it more effectually, when we take hold of the second.

A great deal of the difficulty which persons feel in trying to realise the thought of God is not properly caused by want of faith, but by the vastness of the idea regarded in itself; whereas it is condensed and brought home to us, and commends itself most power-

fully to mind and heart and conscience, in the light of the Divine Incarnation. "He that hath seen Me," said our Lord, "hath seen the Father;" and the long experience of Christian history has shown that a true Theism has its stronghold in Christian faith and worship.¹ The issue as between belief and unbelief, in our time, is fundamentally whether there is a living God, and whether man is a spiritual being. And it is the disciple and servant of Christ who can say with deepest and happiest confidence, "Praise thou the Lord, O my soul." Our best hope for those who at present are clinging to Theism without having got a hold on Christianity, is that they may believe in a real God, a God with will, personality, and character, as utterly as did the Psalmist, as the prophet who fell back repeatedly on the recorded Divine assurance, "I, even I, am the Lord;"² and then that they may, by the light of that belief, come to see "the glory of God in the face of Jesus," and to "have the Father" by "acknowledging the Son."

¹ Liddon, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 452, ff.; Flint on Theism, p. 305.

² See Isa. xliii.

SERMON V.

FAITH AS JUSTIFYING.

“That he might be the father of all them that believe.”

ROM. iv. 11.

WE must all alike feel, I think, the solemn and pathetic significance of this day's services, as belonging to the first Sunday of the opening civil year.

“The year begins with Thee,
And Thou beginn'st with woe.”

The Passion casts its shadow over the Infancy; the principle of obedience receives one of its most vivid illustrations. As we look forward into the avenue of the future, the obligation of resistance to sinful impulses is enforced, while we pray for grace to have all “worldly and carnal lusts” thoroughly “mortified” by “the circumcision” that comes from “the Spirit.” Yet further, we begin a fresh period of life with all the better hope, with all the higher purpose, because it is consecrated by the remembrance of that day when the Holy Name of Jesus was formally

bestowed on the Son of the Virgin.¹ We go forth, as it were, along the unknown path, under the shelter, and also under the sunshine, of that only Name wherein we can find strength and salvation, the Name which animates our worship in time, the Name which, we trust, will be our joy for all eternity.

We see, then, that there is much to be thought over, and much which one might opportunely speak of, on this Sunday. But let us fix on one point, which the Epistle for the day brings forward. Circumcision is placed by St. Paul in its true aspect, as a sign of something earlier, something more vital—that is, of faith. “Abraham believed God, and that faith was reckoned to him for righteousness.” When? Before he was circumcised, God had told him—the solitary, childless exile from his own country—that He would be “his shield, and his exceeding great reward;” that no slave born in his house should be his heir, but that he himself should have descendants as numerous as the orbs of heaven.² He was bidden to look up into the starry sky, and therein to see an image of his own patriarchal future; and he “believed in the Lord;” he renewed the act of faith made when he was bidden to “go forth to a place which he was

¹ Preached when Jan. 1 fell on a Sunday.

² Gen. xv. 1—5.

to inherit,¹ and assured that in him should all families of the earth be blessed. Of this first call he is now reminded. "I am the Lord, that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land." He believed, as he had believed when he was parted from his kinsman, and was told that his seed should be as the dust of the earth.² He believed, in spite of appearances, with a strong, resolute, affectionate reliance on the word of an unseen Guide and Father; and thus he won that august title which put on record for all time the intimacy of his relation to the Eternal, and reminded the Israelites that they were the descendants of the "friend of God." As a true poet has described him—

"The better portion didst thou choose, great Heart,
Thy God's first choice, and pledge of Gentile-grace!
Faith's truest type, he with unruffled face
Bore the world's smile, and bade her slaves depart.

.

O happy in their soul's high solitude,
Who commune thus with God, and not with earth!"³

It was, then, because of that acceptance before God, which this persistent and heroic trustfulness had secured for Abraham, that he "received the sign of circumcision," as a witness of that promised blessing

¹ Heb. xi. 8.

² Gen. xiii. 16.

³ Newman, in *Lyra Apostolica*, p. 27.

which he believed to be certainly in store, and as a symbol of the relation which should exist between himself and all others who, whether or not circumcised, should "walk in the steps of his faith," and, as believing men, should have a right to call him their father.

In these steps, dear brethren, we Christians must walk, if we would get safely and happily through the time that may yet remain for us. Let us think a little about the elements of true faith, what it involves, what it requires, and what it ensures. It is a complex thing, certainly. We cannot take up one part of it and say, "This is faith," or "that is faith;" we must look at it all round, we must do justice to all its parts. We must avoid, in this, as in other cases pertaining to truth which comes from the Infinite, that fatal propensity to what is called "simplifying," which would choose one bit of truth, and let go others; would "halve the Gospel"¹ in this way or in that; would reduce the Creed to one or two favourite propositions. Faith includes, of course, an intellectual assent to certain statements as conveying truth from God, and claiming to be received by man. In other words, you cannot have faith without doctrine. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is,"² and that He has a

¹ *Lyra Apostolica*, p. 142.

² Heb. xi. 6.

certain moral character;—and that is a doctrine. He that believes in Jesus Christ must know who and what Jesus Christ is, and what He has done, and is doing for him;—and that is a doctrine too. In short faith is essentially theological. But if it is to be like Abraham's faith, and to justify, that is, to be a ground of acceptance, it must involve more than this. How much more? Have we true faith if we can get ourselves to trust that Christ has died for us individually, that we personally have an interest in His salvation? Undoubtedly, the element of personal affiance must come in, for we are persons dealing with a Person, and the ground of our Christian hope is the death of Christ our Saviour; but it is possible—strange and sad though it be,—it is possible for a man to be quite orthodox in his convictions as to Divine truth, or to be fully persuaded that the work of redemption includes him in its scope, and yet to be far from the standing-ground of Abraham, and of those who, like him, have “justifying” faith. In order to stand with them before God, we must have faith full-formed and vitalised. There must be a movement of the whole being towards Him in Whom to believe thoroughly is to be accepted with Him. There must be a surrender, a consecration, a committal of the whole self to Him; intellect, feeling, affection,

will, must all be dedicated as a whole burnt-offering; and then the soul that thus believes with a faith which is living, because it is loving and active, is in a proper moral and spiritual attitude before Him, is competent to be a recipient of further grace. One must say of *further* grace, for, of course, this faith is itself the response of the soul to the call of grace; without grace, it could not exist at all.¹ Observe, too, that this is not by any means the same thing as saying that faith means a series of what are called good works; it is rather the principle which will afterwards produce good works, if time is given for them. Put the idea into other words: let a soul say to God, "I give myself to Thee; I open all the doors of my being to Thy Presence; I renounce all independence; I own Thy claim on me in its completeness; take Thou full possession of me;" and then, and thereby, it commends itself to God. The barriers which keep grace from flowing in freely upon the soul are broken down, like dykes in flood-time; the healing stream rushes in, and, as in Ezekiel's inspiring vision, becomes "a river that cannot be passed over, and everything where it shall come shall

¹ Grace, as a movement of the Holy Spirit upon the soul, makes this response possible, but does not *necessitate* it. The distinction is well stated in the third and fourth canons of the Council of Trent on Justification.

live.¹ Even as when our Lord was able to do great works for those who trusted Him, so now He is able to be the Saviour of those who commit themselves to Him. On one occasion we are told by St. Mark that He could not work miracles at Nazareth except on a few sick folk, and that He marvelled because of the unbelief² of His fellow-townsmen in general. On the other hand, we find Him using the remarkable expression, "Thy faith hath saved thee," not only in regard to a bodily healing, but once, at least, in regard to a spiritual.³ In Himself, of course, He had absolute power over physical evils; but even in dealing with them, He looked into the sufferer's moral condition, because physical cures would not, from the standpoint of His redemptive purpose, be real blessings if separated from moral recovery. And in regard to the latter, we must not recoil from the description of faith as "saving," as if, somehow, it were not edifying, as if it obscured the necessity of spiritual dependence on "the good hand of God," and fostered men's arrogant reluctance to look outside themselves for the principle of spiritual restoration.⁴ Our Lord means to say that faith, involving a moral, interior responsiveness, is,

¹ Ezek. xlvii. 5, 9.

² Mark vi. 5, 6.

³ Luke vii. 50, and perhaps in xvii. 19, compared with viii. 48, and xviii. 42.

⁴ The phrase has actually been wrested into a disclaimer, on our Lord's part, of supernatural powers.

according to the rule of His merciful operations, a necessary condition of their effect. "How often," He once said, with pathos unspeakable, "did I wish to gather you together, and you did not wish it!" "Therefore," His words imply, "I could not do it: you stopped Me." For here we touch a great principle in God's dealings with responsible agents. They must sympathise with His purposes, must answer to His appeals, must heartily open themselves to Him; *then* He can bless them, then they can enter into close fellowship with Him. Before, while they kept Him, as it were, at arm's length,—as they could do by misuse of their free-will,—they thwarted His merciful intentions, and barred the full influx of His love, which might have been their life; but now that they are no longer "straitened" towards Him, He is free to show them all that is in His heart.

We see, then, how it is; we see what faith means, and why Scripture treats it as so unspeakably important. Practically, for us, the question of questions is, "Shall I, then, put myself, simply and loyally into God's hands through Jesus Christ?" May His Holy Spirit enable us both now and throughout this year to make the right answer, and to be blessed with, yes, and above "Abraham His friend!"¹

¹ Isa. xli. 8.

SERMON VI.

MORAL SUPPORTS OF FAITH.

“Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”—ST. JOHN vi. 67-69.

WHAT is the principal subject, the characteristic or dominant idea of the Fourth Gospel? I suppose we should answer, The full significance of the title, “Son of God;” the Divine glory of the eternal Word, revealed in the perfections, moral and spiritual, of His character as Incarnate. It has been truly said that, so far from contradicting the estimates of Christ’s work which are found in the first three Gospels, “St. John gives us the key” to all of them. “What Christ did and said becomes thus explicable, by our knowing more fully what Christ is.” His relation to the Old Testament, His human activities, His comprehensive, world-wide mercy, are all harmonised by the expansion which St. John gives to the intimations of earlier Evangelists as to the majesty of His unique

Person. It is as if a curtain were fully uplifted. Jesus Christ is "evidently set forth," not as the most eminent of saints, not as the ally or instrument of the Word, but as Himself the Word, made flesh, dwelling among men, full of grace and truth, and so "interpreting," as it is said, the mind of the Father, and by acts and words revealing that glory which belonged to Him essentially as the only-begotten Son.

But observe the care with which St. John insists on the reality of that manhood which He assumed as the vehicle of this self-revelation. Is it not one of the most persuasive evidences for the authentic character of this Gospel, is it not one of the very best lessons which an Apostle such as John could teach to theological students, that in this picture of the Incarnate Son there is no sacrifice of one element to the other, that justice is done to both sides of a Divine fact, since He who in the beginning was with God, and was God, is seen to have entered so truly into the sphere of human life that He could, as man, be wearied with a journey, could weep for a death, could be "troubled" by the thought of impending anguish? ¹ The Christ of St. John cannot

¹ "The details of our Lord's human manifestation in this Gospel vary from those in the Synoptics; but He is arrayed in exactly the same human vesture as in the latter Gospels." Row, *The Jesus of the Evangelists*, p. 224.

be accurately represented except as the "perfect God and perfect Man" of the Church's Catholic faith. The "one Person in two natures" is He who, being "the effulgence of the Father's glory," became a "merciful and faithful High Priest, able to sympathise with our infirmities," and fitted by sufferings to be the "Leader" of the saved. And so it is that, looking back to some special crises in His earthly history, we also, in all reverence, may venture to sympathise with Him; not the least, assuredly, when He asks that sorrowful question, "Will ye also go away?"

Think how it was, and why it was, that He thus spoke. After a long discourse, which had traversed a wide range of gracious mysteries, rising by measured steps from height to height, He had to see many of His hearers, hitherto His followers, pausing, objecting, and finally turning away. They had heard Him say that He was the Food by eating of which men were to live, that if they did not eat of His Flesh and drink of His Blood they would have no life. It was a "hard saying" to them; they stumbled at it. He bade them associate the thought with His future return to His pre-existent glory, when His Humanity, as glorified and made spiritual, should be communicated as a principle of "life;" but He also reminded them of His own saying, that no man

could come to Him except it were given him of the Father. This was too much for their patience; they felt it to be confounding, bewildering, more than they had bargained for; they gave it up, and, therewith, gave Him up too. And He—what must He have felt? They were separating themselves from Him, and, in Him, from their truest life. But He could not recall them by unsaying His own words,—could not say, “Come back, and I will make it smooth and simple.” He saw before Him one of those facts which Scripture emphasises—that high truth repels some, while it wins others. He had been “set for the fall of many,” and these were among the fallen. What He could do was to turn to His own Twelve, although He foreknew that one of them would be a traitor. With sorrowful tenderness He asks, “And you—have you, too, a mind to go away?” Peter, as spokesman, replies, from a full heart, “Lord, to whom shall we go?” “If we leave Thee,” he means, “who is there that we can trust?” “Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we have come to believe and know that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” or, as probably we should read, “That Thou art the Holy One of God.”

Let us enter into his meaning. He does not say, “What was puzzling those others is clear to us;”

no, but rather, "We can put up with difficulties for a time, on the strength of what we know Thee to be. Thou hast proved Thy right to be our Master. We have an interior confidence, the grounds of which lie deepest in our own experience of what we owe to Thee. If others forsake Thee, our part, at least, is taken; we will cling the more closely to Thee, because Thou art what Thou art."

The words come home to us in a day when so many voices are heard to raise questions about the claims of Christ, as a sovereign Teacher, on the trust and obedience of thoughtful men, or, at any rate, as to this or that article of the faith which has been preached for so many ages in His Name. "How can the text help us?" it may be asked. In this way, surely; that, in the first place, it indicates the conditions which must go before any solid and healthful belief—those instincts, affections, and predispositions which look up to a living God, and look out for tokens of His will. It is when we give to these a fair hearing that the Christian interpretation of that will, and of human life as ordered by it, commends itself more and more to the conscience and to the heart. Man's own soul will be the most convincing witness for his God; his sense of personality, of freedom, of moral duty, of weakness and

dependence, will plead more powerfully than arguments from without. And then he will feel that "the story of Calvary"—yes, and of Calvary as following on the story of Bethlehem and Nazareth—is to all his faculties, except the "sensuous experience, the most natural, probable, necessary of events,—assuming only that God is a righteous Person."¹ And the more that he learns of Christ, or, rather as St. Paul says, that he "learns Christ"² (for His religion is but the expression or manifestation of His Person), the more that he contemplates that character, and enters into its spirit, the better will he appreciate the question, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" An atmosphere will form around his soul, instinct with a deepening assurance of the reality of the Christian faith. Within that area he will be at home and in peace, when unbelief is "as a storm against the wall."³ But remember the full import of learning Christ. It is not merely a matter of apprehending the beauty or coherency of Christ's teaching; it is a matter of personal fellowship with Christ Himself, as a trusted and worshipped Master. We must try to obey Christ in daily conduct, if we would

¹ Kingsley, *Hypatia*, p. 348.

² Eph. iv. 20.

³ See Trench's *Hulsean Lectures*, p. 149. "Let us have a sanctuary to retreat to . . . let us be able to say, These words, we have found them words of healing, words of eternal life."

“know whom we believe,” and find His words to be “words of eternal life.” We must, in a word, strive practically to follow Him. Peter and others had done so with singleness of heart; therefore, when keener trials of faith came, they could say, “We believe and are sure.” They had come to love Him; therefore love sustained their belief, and it can sustain ours. As faith acts through love, so love reacts on faith, so as to make faith more vital, and to pour into it just the strength which it needs. It is good to associate Christian doctrine—say, the doctrine of the Trinity, of the Atonement, of the Sacraments—with the moral character of God, and the moral needs and capacities of man; but it is better still to accustom oneself to live as in the presence of Christ, and of the Father as seen in Christ, and at each turn of life to say, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” He who aims steadily at this is in the way of securing that true support of faith which is essentially moral, spiritual, and practical.

Brethren, it were well for us to resolve that we will definitely make this an object; will use, for this end, all means of grace, all holy opportunities; will avoid, for this end, all occasions of sin, all contact with influences which might loosen our hold on Christ; will endeavour to bring Christ into our

common life, and so to make it indeed "worth living," and thus to gain some place among those genuine "believers on the Son of God" who "have the witness in themselves." For that witness is effective to him who has it, although he may not be able to bring it home to others except by the impressive consistency of his own life. "There is," it has been well said, "a great reserve fund of conviction, arising from the increased experience which Christian men have of the truth of what they believe. It is something too inward, too personal, too mystical, to be set forth" in forms of argument. "It is not on that account the less real and powerful; indeed, it may be said that, once felt, it is the most self-evidencing of all proofs. This is what Coleridge said, If you wish to be assured of the truth of Christianity, *try it*." ¹

¹ Shairp, *Culture and Religion*, p. 87.

SERMON VII.

SPIRITUAL DIMNESS.

“Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.”—ISA. l. 10.

THE season of Epiphany, on which we have just entered, is dedicated to the idea of Light from God, as concentrated in the Person of His Incarnate Son, the true Light that lighteneth every man. Scripture is full of testimonies to this office of the Christ; and the early Christians, who had felt the deep horror of Pagan darkness, could realise, as we cannot, the fulfilment of those words of prophecy which ring in our ears on Christmas morning, “The people that sat in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” So that we cannot wonder if some of them dwelt habitually on their Lord’s character as the Dayspring that had shone out, with a reanimating and heart-uplifting splendour, on those

that were sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. Baptism itself, as we gather from two passages in one Epistle, was known familiarly as the "enlightening."¹ We have, perhaps, a fragment of a primitive baptismal hymn in those rhythmical words which St. Paul once quotes—

"Arouse thee, thou that sleepest,
And from the dead arise,
And Christ on thee shall shine." ²

We have certainly good evidence of this habit of thought in the ancient Eastern hymn still extant,³ whereby the kindling of the evening lamp in Christian households was greeted by a burst of thankful homage to Christ, as the "cheering Light from the Father's holy glory." Teachers arose, brilliant, affectionate, and hopeful, who spent their lives in showing to inquirers how the craving of the soul for light was met and answered by the Author of Christianity. They were thus led to insist rather too exclusively upon this aspect of His work;⁴ and ere long a deeper view, which took fuller account of the needs

¹ Heb. vi. 4; x. 32.

² Eph. v. 14.

³ Φῶς ἱλαρὸν ἀγίας δόξης, κ.τ.λ.

⁴ "La révélation est moins pour Clément une rédemption que la communication de la lumière céleste. . . . Ce n'est pas que cette notion de la réparation soit absente de ses écrits, mais elle n'y occupe pas la première place: elle s'idéalise à l'excès," etc. Pressensé, Tr. Pr. Siècl. ii. 2. 267.

of man as a sinful being, reasserted itself, and, pre-eminently through the vast influence of one richly-gifted mind—let us say also, of one large and loving heart,—became supreme in the thought of Western Christendom. We are, all of us, to a great extent, even if unconsciously, the pupils of that great Father who had been in his own person a signal instance of God's converting mercy. Our Collects overflow with the spirit of St. Augustine, for they repeatedly presuppose and emphasise what is called the doctrine of grace. But it is not well to lose interest in any aspect under which Scripture leads us to contemplate Him whom no one description can adequately portray, because "in Him dwells the whole fulness of the Godhead." Even now, many souls are first drawn towards Him by His offer of truth, and so come to appreciate what St. Paul calls "the riches of His grace." And in our day, when a prevailing form of unbelief would fain persuade us that what is supersensuous is, as such, incapable of being verified, it is but right to grasp firmly the principle which underlies our creed, and to proclaim our conviction that certain facts about the eternal and spiritual world can really be taught, and learned, and lived upon; and that although in this world we cannot comprehend God, we can, in a true and practical sense, apprehend Him.

We believe that He has spoken, so that man can hear. The craving to know Him, at least in part, is not a mere illusion or fantastic wish, diverting us, as some would say, from the real business of life, wasting our strength on a fruitless speculation, and weakening our capacities for such efforts as would yield us solid fruit; but rather it is that which gives to life its true meaning and value, and in the Divine answer returned to it we can obtain, even in this world, a firstfruits of that felicity which will be consummated in the "beatific vision" of God.

And at certain points in our sacred year we feel specially able to sympathise with those who were brought, as the Church says at Whitsuntide, "out of darkness and error into the clear light," the resplendent sunshine of the Father's glory, as revealed to man through Christ. The Collect for the Epiphany was written by some one who had learned to gaze on the true Light; but our translators have not, in this instance, done their work so well as usual. It should run, "That we, who know Thee now by faith, may be led on to contemplate Thy majesty by sight," or, "to behold the clear vision of Thy glory."¹ This is the prospect—faith daily strengthening, brightening,

¹ "Usque ad contemplandam speciem tuæ celsitudinis perducamur."

mounting upward, until at last it melts into sight, when we shall "see the King in His beauty."

It is a prospect, indeed; but we often feel unable to enter into it. And it may be of some use, even in this very season, to think of a form of trial which is not very uncommon, even among Christians who desire to "walk as children of light,"—the trial of obscured spiritual perceptions.

Times of opportunity are often times of disappointment, in the order of grace, as in the order of this world. There are strange contradictions within our own being,—mysteries of the inner life which baffle us, which show us how poorly we understand ourselves. Perhaps we remember how, as children, we could not assimilate, as it were, the joy or sorrow which occupied our families at this or that time; we seemed to our elders insensible, unfeeling, even stupid; but we could not help it. So it is, sometimes, with grown-up people. Say to yourself that on a certain occasion you will be sure to be strongly moved, lifted up out of your commonplace tranquillity into a higher sphere of feeling or thought; and see whether, when the time comes, your expectations are verified. They may be,—but also they may not. Sometimes, just because we want to feel, we seem as if we could not feel. And this holds true as to

sacred seasons—a Christmastide, a Lent, or an Easter. A person looks forward to some such “time of visitation;” he takes for granted that it will make penitence easy and devotion spontaneous, that he will be illuminated, awakened, enkindled, or chastened, subdued, overawed, by its services. They begin; he attends them. Ah, what a shock! There is a felt blank, an emptiness, a chill; the spiritual eyesight is dim; the heart seems frozen up. “What is this?” he asks himself. “I am really further off than I was before, less able to realise the presence of God, less responsive to the touch of religion as a power.” The trouble may take various forms. Let us try to picture two of them.

1. A person joins, we will say, in the confession or the thanksgiving, or the tender, solemn pleadings which appeal to the efficacy of the Incarnate Life; or perhaps he approaches the Blessed Sacrament. Yet he feels as if he were not really sorry for his sins, could not heartily rejoice in the redemption or the hope of glory, had found no refreshment in the Bread and Cup of the Lord. Naturally, he is astonished, disquieted, perhaps frightened. “Why,” he asks, “is there this haze, this fog, between my soul and the verities of the Creed—between myself and my God? What has come to me? What has stiffened my

faculty of repenting, of worshipping, of longing after the living God, of sympathising with the great heart of the Church? Why am I like the fleece that was dry when there was dew on all the ground? Ought I to go on saying holy words, which do not any longer seem honest on my lips?" You see the temptation; he is in peril of absenting himself from God's worship,—of shortening, or even dropping his own prayers, because of this harassing sense of an inconsistency between them and his inward state, and because he has a conscientious dread of keeping up what may be a religious sham. Or he may drift into that strange mood of discontent in which God is regarded as a "hard" Master, with real anger at His dealings, as if unreasonable, as if inconsistent with His own promises; a mood, as it has been called, of "black disloyalty," shocking and senseless when looked at from without, but, as Scripture intimates, only too human,—for Israel's "murmurings" are human indeed.

2. And sometimes the trial is even sorer. The dimness becomes a thick cloud, and out of that dreary gloom terrible questions shape themselves. "After all, does God hear my prayer? Is He, as I used to believe, close to me, and within me? Does He interest Himself about me? Can I get

near Him by any religious acts?" Then presently, "Is it possible that those teachers are right who have convinced so many followers that the Infinite must for ever be the Unknown?" I will not go further; you can imagine how the self-questioning might proceed. A man may be gradually persuaded that, because he has less and less power of realising sacred things, he has, in fact, parted with his faith, or even that he has seen through the "illusions" which once made faith his treasure. And so he may, in sad earnest, drift away from the Christian anchorage; he may sink into his darkness, and call it "light," the only light possible for man; he may break with religion altogether; yes, he who had once clung to the Cross of Christ, who had tasted that the Lord, *his* Lord, was gracious, may turn aside from faith and hope, may come to speak with contemptuous indulgence of the Christian "legend" and the "superstitions" which hang around it, and settle himself to live, and compose himself to die, as if Christ had never died and risen again, as if he himself had no God, and, in effect, no soul.

We ought, surely, to feel for those who suffer from a trial which might thus end. I believe that many do so, who cannot bear to speak of it. It seems too shocking to be laid open, even to a friend. They

brood over their dreary secret; and the evil grows worse, while it strikes deeper root within. What should they do, brethren? What should we ourselves do, if we were conscious of being in the earlier stages of such a condition?

1. The first question for the soul thus afflicted is, Do I want to be set free? Should I be glad and thankful if I could be again "as I was in days when God's candle shined upon my head, and by His light I walked through darkness"?¹ If he can answer earnestly, "Yes," then all may sooner or later be well. The deliverance may only be a matter of patient waiting, of tarrying the Lord's leisure, of looking for the vision that will come in its appointed time.

2. Let him remember, next, that, from the Christian point of view, his trouble is no strange thing. Good men, even holy men, have known something of it. Psalmists have complained of the hiding of God's face.² In the lives of saints³ one may read of a period of dimness, of dryness, which had to be passed through. And are we better than our fathers?

3. And then, how to account for it? Let this truth be firmly grasped—it is not from any change in the will of the Most Merciful. He is where He was, and

¹ Job xxix. 2, 3.

² *E.g.* Ps. xiii. 1; xlv. 24; lxxxviii. 14.

³ *E.g.* see Alban Butler, *Lives of the Saints*: Aug. 21.

what He was, with no "variableness" to cast a "shadow" on the many "lights" of His continuous goodwill.¹ But there may be in the soul itself some element of sin which is not yet effectively repented of. Or even if conscience reports that the will is turned towards God, and not away from Him, then the trial may be regarded as a penance or a discipline, to be accepted with patient humility, as an admonition to seek God for Himself rather than for His consolations.² In that case, the best thing to do is, first, to place one's self, in purpose, at the feet of the Redeemer; "to keep as much as possible in the presence of the Father;"³ to make acts of faith or love or penitence; to wish that they were more real, and persevere until they become more real; to say, "May the holy will of God be done by me and in regard to me." In the words of a saint who could speak from experience,⁴ "Blessed is that soul which remains steadfast amid dryness and sensible desolation; which can then love God more truly because more purely, and so, after being proved, can come forth as gold." This is for us the

¹ James i. 17.

² See *Imit. Chr.* ii. 9.

³ Alban Butler, *Lives of the Saints*: Oct. 4. Compare Toplady:—

"When we in darkness walk,
Nor feel the heavenly flame,
Then is the time to trust our God,
To rest upon His Name."

⁴ Francis de Sales. Cp. Scupoli on Interior Peace, c. 11.

full import of the prophet's pitying counsel, "to trust in the Name of the Lord, to stay upon our God." And then, let the soul go out of itself into its duties, and try to do something as Christ's law would have it done; let there be an effort to do kindnesses to others, and make them, if possible, a little happier; and let a special watch be kept against all known evil. Hymns, or texts, cherished in memory, will tend to soften the heart and to quicken faith.

Remember that to lack comfort is not always to lack grace, and that dryness of feeling is not necessarily barrenness of soul. Keep on looking for the light, and believe that it will again shine, even as the star was hidden for a while from the Magi, and then reappeared to guide them to His presence, who came in our flesh, to make of His love an Epiphany for us all. "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." May such joy be the portion of souls that have *not* "lost patience,"¹ but, when constrained for a while to "walk in darkness," have not "compassed themselves about with sparks of their own kindling," but have steadily trusted in the Name of the Lord, and stayed themselves upon their God!

¹ Eccles. ii. 14.

SERMON VIII.

THE TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD.

“In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.”—HEB. ii. 18.

THE word which we render “temptation” is sometimes used in Scripture with reference to suffering or trouble, considered as a trial of patience and faith.¹ But as we feel that such an interpretation would be inadequate if applied to the familiar petition in the Lord’s Prayer, so we know from the description of our Lord’s mysterious sojourn in the wilderness that He was then actually exposed to evil suggestions proceeding from that apostate spirit whom St. Paul names, pre-eminently, “the Tempter.”

But a question arises at the outset: How could our Lord and Saviour, the only-begotten Son of God, be tempted, in His humanity, to sin?

We must first distinguish between two kinds of

¹ As in Acts xx. 19; 1 Pet. i. 6; cp. Gen. xxii. 1.

temptation,—the direct, which addresses itself to corrupt propensities, which endeavours to stimulate the element of self-will into some form of actual disobedience to, or revolt from, the known will of God; and the indirect, which appeals to some natural instincts or feelings, in themselves innocent, and endeavours to represent obedience to God's will, at the expense of such instincts, as too painful.

Now, it is a point of faith that Christ was personally Divine. His manhood had been assumed into union with His Divine Self; indeed, it had never existed apart from such union.¹ This did not exempt it from simple infirmities, from strictly human sensations or emotions; and it was destined, from the first, to be the sphere of His redemptive sufferings; but it *was* exempted from all sinful tendencies by its intimate relation to the Godhead, which, if we may so speak, encompassed it with an atmosphere of sanctity, so as to exclude from it, absolutely and entirely, the seeds and constituents of rebellious self-will. Concupiscence, as it has been termed, was wholly absent from our Saviour's spotless manhood; there was no proneness to evil, no sympathy with sin, "nothing," as He Himself said, in which Satan could

¹ See Hooker, E. P. v. 52. 3; Wilberforce on the Incarnation, p. 133.

claim an interest.¹ It was because His human nature did not stand alone, but was "taken into God," that He, as Man, was literally impeccable.²

But, then, the human nature of Christ was, as we have just seen, most truly human, and had all the needs, cravings, and desires which involve no moral taint. As Man, He could and did feel pain, and shrink from feeling it; He could be weary, hungry, thirsty; could long after sympathy, could value influence and success, could wonder and grieve and be angered; one need not speak of the Passion and the Death. And so far, therefore, indirect temptation could tell upon Him. It could, for instance, produce in His mind the momentary wish that escape from suffering or from conflict could be compatible with obedience to the will of the Father, with fidelity to the mission which He had come to accomplish. But it could go no further; it could not produce, even for a moment, the wish, still less the resolve, to free Himself from the law of obedience; for such a wish or resolve could only be possible where the principle of self-will was *not* excluded. And when the incompatibility of the desired relief with that law of obedience was apprehended by our Saviour's human

¹ John xiv. 31.

² See Hutchings' *Mystery of the Temptation*, p. 117, ff.

consciousness,¹ there could be no question as to which should be preferred. His holy human will would at once, and of course, reject the suggestion, control the instinctive wish, and reaffirm the resolution of uttermost loyalty to the will Divine.

But, then, it will be asked, what could be the meaning of a temptation so limited and so powerless? If Christ was "tempted," might He not have fallen, although, in fact, He stood fast? If He was to be our Example in resistance to temptation, must He not have really shared our peril, and secured a victory when He might have incurred a defeat?

Let us, by way of reply, consider that those who are for thus extending the range of temptation in His case, who suppose that He might have entertained a wish to break with the law of obedience, and might have carried it into effect, are not only impairing their own belief in the Incarnation, but are entering on a line of thought which will be found inconsistent with a true belief in His office as the spiritual Restorer of humanity. If it is necessary, in order to secure the impressiveness of His human example, that He should have been capable of desiring or willing to do wrong, then we must, con-

¹ In His human, as distinct from His Divine consciousness, one thought would necessarily succeed to another.

sistently, go further. He must not only, as our Pattern, have been liable to the temptations which beset us, but, as a Pattern for all men, He must have had an affinity to any or every evil impulse which misleads any man to his moral ruin. Yet further—if one can bring one's self to put the supposition into words—He must have been capable of absolute rebellion against God, because men are so capable. So that He must not only have been liable to fall in the sense of Adam's liability, as if He had been only what Adam was, but must have been on a par with all of us in regard to what is called "original sin." He must even have had this "corruption of nature" in large and comprehensive extent, must have felt the full pressure of all human temptations, and by sturdy resistance have mastered them all,—when He might, in default of such resistance, have sunk under them. But as such a Christ could not have been in personal union with Godhead, so neither could He be to us the source of purifying influences, which could only proceed from One who was intrinsically pure.¹ He could not be our Life, because the possibilities of moral death had once, at least, adhered to Him. No, assuredly, if we would have a Christ who

¹ See *Church Quarterly Review*, xvi. 292, in an admirable article (July, 1883) on "Our Lord's Human Example."

can effectually save us, He must be a Christ who could not possibly sin.

2. And, next, remember that within its own narrowly bounded area, temptation was a reality to our Lord. Remember that a "thought" or suggestion tending to evil is not of itself sin: sin begins when we take "pleasure" in the idea of evil, and is completed when we "consent" to it. A "thought," then, might be presented to our Lord's mind, in agreement with some natural emotion. He could, as we have seen, feel an eagerness for relief from the gnawing pangs of hunger; His human frame was, probably, exceptionally sensitive, and it might seem most natural that He should, as Son of God, use His power for the supply of so urgent a need. It might occur to Him that there would be no harm, but good, in making a great public act of reliance on the Divine promise of protection; or that it would be a happy thing to hasten the establishment of His own kingdom, to subdue the world without the miseries of a struggle, to win the crown without first bearing the cross. The scene in Gethsemane compresses, as it were, into a small compass, and at the same time highly intensifies, the "temptation" at the outset of His ministry. There, at its close, while fainting under the anguish of the "Sin-bearer," He considers, so

to speak, whether it may not be possible, consistently with His duty, to avoid the awful "cup." "*If it be possible*"—but not otherwise. He sees it is not possible; therefore the lower element in His human will submits to the higher,¹ and He adds, "If this cup may not pass from Me, Thy will be done." So also here in the Temptation, He perceives that to appease His own hunger by a miracle would, under the circumstances, be an act of impatience; that to expect an extraordinary intervention, by way of "forcing" the people to accept Him,² would be an act of spiritual presumption designed to anticipate His appointed "hour;" and that to gain, at once, recognition and homage from all nations, by some compliance which would have the moral import of "worshipping" the Prince of this world, would be a breach of the first commandment. Therefore, in each case, He refuses the proposal on the ground of a Scripture lesson or precept; and in the last case, together with "It is written," we find the final, imperative "Get thee hence!"³

¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.*, iii. q. 18, a. 2, 5, distinguishes within Christ's human will between a "*voluntas sensualitatis*," laxly called "*voluntas*," which "*refugit naturaliter dolores*," and a "*voluntas rationis*." Cp. Hooker, v. 48. 10.

² Hutchings, p. 173. Cp. Mill on The Temptation, p. 112.

³ That probably St. Matthew, rather than St. Luke, is here giving the actual order of the temptations, see Bishop John Wordsworth's *University Sermons on Gospel Subjects*, p. 106.

3. And if the Temptation was thus real within its own limits, although it could not produce in our Lord's human soul any "pleasure" in, or any "consent" to, sin as such, and although it was therefore certain to fail, it must have involved an unspeakable humiliation, a horror and anguish which we sinners cannot conceive. For Him, the Holy One, to be thus brought into contact with the enemy of truth and goodness, whose dominion He had come to overthrow, for Him to be insulted by solicitations from such a quarter and for such a purpose,—this was to "suffer" indeed. And as suffering teaches sympathy, so He who could not in any sense be accessible to evil desires as such could, in some mysterious way, increase His human consciousness of what temptation is to His frail creatures; and His temptation, being a sort of foretaste of His interior Passion, may well be thought to have a virtue of its own, and, accordingly, we entreat Him "by" His Temptation, as "by" His Agony, to "deliver us," to "succour" us mightily whenever we are "tempted."

The more thoroughly we believe in the impeccable holiness of our Saviour, the more deeply must we feel His condescension in stooping thus low for us. And when temptation attacks us in some one of its innumerable forms, we need all the help that we can

get, and we can get all that we need by looking up to Him who was tempted. He knows how, if one temptation loses its force, another starts up to succeed it. We have begun to relax our efforts, we sit down under the oak, we warm ourselves at the fire, we are taken off our guard. Some habit which we seemed to have overcome stirs again, like a serpent bruised and not killed. Or our memory recalls what is fraught with evil; or our besetting fault puts on a disguise, calls itself manliness or independence, claims to be inseparable from our temperament, to have the rights of a part of ourselves. Or we have resisted a long time, and the thought comes, "If I yield this once, it will exhaust the force of the impulse, and I shall obtain peace for the future." Or we have fallen, and then instead of craft comes open assault: "You may as well go on; too late for you now to turn back!" Or even in the midst of our best resolutions, within reach of Divine ordinances, during Church service, on the very evening after a Communion, we are startled and unnerved by some allurements to evil, which we had fancied would be powerless against those who had stood on the holy mount. It is not so,—we can never count on immunity. Bad thoughts may dart into our minds against our will, even while we kneel to receive the Blessed

Sacrament. But He who then gives Himself to us will remember that He was tempted; and if, instead of entertaining the intruder, and giving it time to attract and take hold of us, we promptly trample upon it, and give ourselves up to Him by a fresh renunciation of what He hates, He will not impute to us the evil which we have rejected;¹ the fiery dart will have been quenched, the lion and adder will have been trodden down.

It has often been observed that the very language in which our Lord replied to the tempter was chosen for our instruction and encouragement. He did not refer to His own dignity, but simply to Scripture words which are available for all His servants. And for us, the practical remedy is, in the first place, to keep well out of the way of all occasions of evil, to avoid whatever might awaken dangerous thoughts; and then, if such thoughts present themselves without our seeking, never to entertain or tamper with them, not to spend a moment in speculating about their drift, or in pretending to examine them as if from a safe distance, for to do this is, in the great poet's phrase, to be "merely our own traitors," to

¹ "If the will does not consent, the presence of any amount of temptation may be mere suffering, and, however intense, it will not be sin." Card. Manning, *Sin and its Consequences*, p. 179.

“Tempt the frailty of our powers,
Presuming on their changeful potency.”¹

Rather let us turn aside at once, and appeal to our Lord for aid, in some such momentary prayer as “Help me *now*, O Christ,” “Lord, save me, or I perish,” or simply by the utterance of the holy Name of Jesus; and so carry out the advice of a guide of souls,² “while standing on a precipice-edge, never to look down, but always to look up,” away from the bewildering fascinations of evil, away from the haunting images of past falls, away from all else to that all-merciful Redeemer, who having Himself “suffered, being tempted,” although “without sin,” is able to succour the tempted and to wash the sinners white.

¹ “All’s Well that Ends Well,” act iv. sc. 3; “Troilus and Cressida,” act iv. sc. 4.

² J. M. Neale.

SERMON IX.

THE INCARNATION AND THE
ATONEMENT.

“I will now turn aside, and see this great sight. . . . And God said unto Moses, I am that I am.”—EXOD. iii. 3, 14.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”—ST. JOHN viii. 58.

THIS Sunday¹ forms a landmark in our Christian year. We pass, to-day, so to speak, from the outer court of Lent into the inner; we enter upon Passiontide. Why so? you ask. Why not restrict the special consideration of the Passion to the sacred week, the “great” week, the “authentic” week, as it was formerly called, which begins with Palm Sunday? Because, for ages, it has been the Church’s custom to read, on this Fifth Sunday in Lent, a short portion of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which, by its very first words, enforces on our thought the mystery

¹ Fifth Sunday in Lent.

of our Lord's self-sacrifice, and of the efficacy of that blood, by the pouring forth of which He "offered Himself, through the eternal Spirit,"¹ *i.e.*, probably, through the power of His Divine nature, "without spot to God," "obtained eternal redemption for us," and so became "the Mediator of the new covenant." Do not the words, as we hear them in this day's service, thrill us with the consciousness of our own personal relation to very awful facts? If we have Christian belief as a vital thing in our minds, they speak to us in accents of commanding urgency; they say to us, "You must attend now; you must think where you are, how you personally stand in regard to Christ, what interest you take in His work as High Priest and Sacrifice and Mediator, whether you are nearer to Him in heart and spirit than you were on last Passion Sunday." They bid us, in short, "turn aside and see the great sight" which is gradually unfolding itself, in the last two weeks of this solemn season, before our eyes—those inward eyes which are so often but too unwilling to trouble themselves with the contemplation of the Object on which they should be fixed, "Jesus Christ, evidently set forth," crucified for us men and for our salvation.

"Turn aside and see this great sight,"—turn

¹ Rom. i. 4.

away from that routine of ordinary interests which, while life runs smoothly, is so sadly efficacious in protecting our triviality, our love of the commonplace, our instinctive dread of what is overawing and exacting, from being "put out of its way," and elevated, in spite of itself, to a higher standpoint in a keener atmosphere; from being carried up to Horeb the mount of God, instead of lazily abiding among the fleshpots of Egypt. Let us make an effort for once; let us put ourselves into sympathy with the Church of God, which is the kingdom of the invisible, the supernatural, the mysterious—in St. Paul's comprehensive phrase, of the spiritual. Remember that when the exiled shepherd looked away from all other sights to the strange phenomenon of the bush that burned with fire and was not consumed, he was instantly rewarded by Him who ever meets His children more than half way, and heard the Divine Voice calling out of the bush, and opening the conference which was to mark a new epoch in the spiritual history of mankind. God spake to Moses, and revealed to him the full significance of the Name Jehovah, which, as it appears, had been known to earlier patriarchal worshippers, but not understood in all its meaning, "I am that I am." The oldest Greek version renders, "I am He who is." The

Revised version tells us that it might also be rendered, "I will be that I will be;" and this rendering would emphasise what the common translation would involve, the truth that God, as personal and living, and in relation to His creatures, will be permanently their God. "Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you." It is the revelation of a perpetual Protector, for it is the revelation of "the Lord who changes not;" and it seems to be paraphrased by St. John in the title, "Who is, and who was, and who is to come."¹

But do you not see, my brethren, why this ancient story is linked with Passion Sunday,—what is the relation between this third chapter of Exodus and that solemn passage from the eighth chapter of St. John which, for many a century, has formed this Sunday's Gospel? When you hear of God describing Himself by the words, "I am that I am," can you help thinking of Him who, after the Jews had asked how it was possible for a man far short of fifty years old to have seen Abraham, answered forthwith, with the most emphatic assurance, that He meant what He said in its fullest import: "Before Abraham came into being, I am"? Not "I *was*;" not as if He claimed

¹ Rev. i. 4, 8.

mere pre-existence, such as might have been asserted about an angel. The point of the contrast between the two Greek words is, as has been well said, that He claims "simple existence," independent of all periods. He *is*; He is that He is. It recalled the old form of Divine self-assertion,¹ but it came from One who to the listeners seemed a mere man, and whose previous language had appeared to them the very frenzy of self-assertion. They now took up stones to punish Him as a blasphemer; and observe, He never corrected their interpretation of His words. They saw in what sense He claimed to be the Son of God. Quite lately, one has seen placarded on some of our walls in Oxford a statement of what are called Unitarian opinions, in which it is said that those who hold them believe Jesus Christ to be "Son of God, not God the Son." Rather let us say that because He is "Son of God," in the full sense of that phrase,² as illustrated by

¹ If the title popularly written "Jehovah" represented "not abstract, but active existence," as of "One who asserts His being, and enters into personal relations with His worshippers," and therefore can be relied upon as "consistent with Himself" and "true to His promises" (Prof. Driver, in "*Studia Biblica*," p. 17), this "moral unchangeableness" implies an essential permanence, or eternity of being (Ps. xc. 1, 2).

² That no mere "ethical" sonship can be here intended, see Liddon's *Bampton Lectures*, pp. 10, 235; Christlieb, *Modern Doubt and Christian Belief*, p. 246, E. T.

those awful syllables, "I am," He is "God the Son"—that is, is "one with the Father," not only in will but in essence,¹ consubstantial, co-eternal; and then, in conclusion, take home, for our own thoughts this week, the consideration that it is His Personal Deity which gives efficacy to His sufferings as Man. He would not have been an effectual Atoner, He would not have really delivered us from the Egypt of our lost condition, He would not have vindicated "the eternal law of righteousness"² by His own acceptance of the suffering which was due to sin,—yes, and therewith of that incommunicable spiritual agony, which filled His "cup" with such unique bitterness, and wrung from His lips the cry as of one forsaken by God,—unless He had been, in His very Self, in the very heart of His being, one with the All-holy and Most High. For consider: a mere man would be but one of many; he could not gather up all men into himself. It is because Jesus Christ is Divine that His Manhood has acquired this vast extension of power. In this way the Incarnation acts on His human nature in reference to mankind, whom He can represent effectively, as having "recapitulated" them in Himself; and again, in reference to God, by investing the human acts and sufferings with an

¹ John x. 30.

² Dale on the Atonement, p. 391.

infinite value and preciousness ; so that His Deity renders Him, on the one hand, a completely qualified Priest, on the other, a completely availing Sacrifice. This is a widely different view from that which is now justly discredited, and which imagined a merely arbitrary substitution of Christ, as the one innocent man, for sinners. The word "substitution" represents an aspect of the truth ; but there was no arbitrariness in the matter. Our Lord, being God, and having become Man, that is, *the* Son of Man, the Second Adam, could, by His "obedience even unto death," exhibit and secure the principle of Divine righteousness, and enable those who by a vital faith should accept Him to obtain pardon and renewal through the free working of the Divine love. Thus, in the words of a great theologian,¹ the Divinity of the suffering Christ "underlies the contrast between the blood of bulls and goats, and the blood of Christ offering Himself to God." If He is God, "the disclosures of revelation respecting the efficacy of His death do not appear to be excessive;" its "world-redeeming virtue" is "illuminated" by the truth of His Divinity.

Let us, my brethren, walk in that awful light, as believers in it, and as conscious of the responsibilities

¹ Liddon, Bampton Lectures, p. 485 ; cp. Univ. Sermon, i. 240.

which it involves; and so let us prepare to look up, on Good Friday, as to a mystery of infinite love, expressing itself, for those who will receive it, in a mystery of not less infinite redemption. Or rather let us say that the imagery of redeeming, ransoming, or buying off, is used in Scripture as an illustration of the energy of Divine love, exerting itself for man's rescue by signal interventions which might in human language be described as efforts made at a great cost, and at last culminating in that supreme act of God whereby, to free us from the bondage of sin, and from its penalties, He "spared not His own Son." And while we confess that we were bought with a price exceeding all "corruptible things," let us take to heart St. Peter's solemn inference,¹ and "pass the time of our sojourning" in that holy "fear" which is not cast out, but sustained by holy love.

¹ 1 Pet. i. 17.

SERMON X.

HEARING OF GOD, OR SEEING
HIM.

“I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear : but now mine eye
seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.’
—JOB xlii. 5, 6.

A PASSAGE from the Book of Job would have seemed to the early Christians very appropriate as a text for thought in Holy Week. A great Father and Bishop,¹ preaching on a Wednesday before Easter, at a time of signal anxiety for his own Church, began his sermon with, “You have heard the Book of Job read, as it is read according to custom at this time.” The feeling was, that Job was an eminent instance of suffering, and, as such, a type of the Christ in His character of Sufferer. But that is not the point on which I wish at present to dwell. Rather, let us ask why Job is described as uttering this remarkable confession of a new experience, as emphasising this

¹ St. Ambrose, Epist. xx. 14.

contrast between the hearing about God with the ear, and the seeing Him with the eye of the soul?

We all know that, according to the story, the friends of Job had added to his affliction by a coarse and superficial theory of its cause. "You must have been exceptionally sinful, or God would never have visited you with such exceptional distress." He could not accept this rough and ready way of accounting for the stroke upon stroke which had so suddenly beaten him down. He would not, for he could not, charge himself with any conspicuous offences, although he was conscious that human righteousness could not assert itself as capable of standing the judgment of the All-holy; yet he could not say that which was not true, merely because they urged him to confess himself guilty of this or that crime. It is very remarkable that what, at last, he accepts as the only possible solution to the problem, is not, as we should have expected, a revelation of God's fatherly purpose in the chastisement of children whom He loves, but simply the enforcement of His inscrutable wisdom and power. "The depth," as St. Paul calls it, "of the riches of that wisdom," the profound mysteriousness of its judgments and its ways—it is this which awes Job into acquiescence. He does not even say, "One who is so wise and so powerful must needs be, some-

how, all-good ;” he simply throws himself, with closed eyes, into the arms of the Most High, and contents himself with saying that he has uttered things “too wonderful for him, which he knows not ;” he gives up the attempt to account for the terrible discipline under which he has passed ; he says, in effect, “God knows”—just that, and nothing more. An act of faith was this, assuredly not unworthy of our serious attention ; but, at present, let us keep to the point I spoke of—the contrast drawn between a condition in which Job had been, and a condition in which he was.

Why does he say that once he had heard of God “with the hearing of the ear,” as distinct from seeing Him, in an effective though spiritual sense ?

The answer seems to be, that formerly he had been religious and conscientious, or, as the story says, “perfect and upright, fearing God and eschewing evil,” carefully guarding against any abuse of prosperity, and patient, to a very considerable extent, under sufferings in mind, body, and estate—sufferings varied, acute, heartrending. But this religiousness, although real in its own way, had not brought him near enough to God. He had thought he was near, but, in fact, he had been a good way off ; he had not thoroughly realized the awful Presence, nor duly estimated the

eternal Mind, in its relation to himself. By a process which to us may appear strange; by an argument which we may think inadequate to produce the desired effect, because it left out of sight the fact of God's love, with all its stores of unspeakable consolation; by strange ways, if we choose so to regard them, Job had come to see things in their true light. Once he had only heard, now he saw—that was just the difference. The possession of a new, profound, intense experience had changed his whole idea of life; he had gained perceptions previously unknown to him; he could never again be merely as he was before. He realised his position before God; and—observe the solemn significance of the result—"therefore he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes," appreciating his own sinfulness with a keenness unfelt when he had previously cried out, "Make me to know my transgression and my sin."¹

Carlyle once called the Book of Job "all men's book;"² and, to confine ourselves to the point before us, there are many religious people who have got no further than the hearing of the ear. Theirs is a mental apprehension and acceptance of revealed truth, of the Christian Creed. Theirs, too, is a sincere religiousness in thought, and act, and speech; no

¹ Job xiii. 23.

² In "Heroes and Hero-worship."

hypocrites are they when they use religious language, repeat prayers, frequent ordinances. They do so because they believe it to be right. They follow at a distance, perhaps with a sort of envy, those whom they see to enjoy a fervour and vividness of faith to which they have not, as yet, attained. Some day, they hope, they will enjoy religion more; meantime, they go on repeating its formulas with a real though somewhat cold sincerity, and also trying, as a matter of duty, to observe its precepts. What lack they but this great thing, which Job once lacked—a personal consciousness of their own relation to a personal Father, and, we must add, a personal Saviour and Sanctifier? How are they to gain this realising, assimilating faith, whereby they will be able to say, “I know in whom I have believed; I believe and am sure that Thou art my God, that Thou art my Christ”? How, in short, is the hearing of the ear to be transformed into the seeing of the eye?

Not, one would say, by attempts to excite feeling. Devotional books are sometimes rather over-full of high-strung, emotional language, which is not made real to the persons using it by their mere resolve to take it on their lips. Feeling cannot be forced; it comes when God sends it, and, if it is to do any good, it must be used to help us over difficulties in the path

of obedience.¹ No; let us rather have recourse, if we are still but "hearers" and hardly "seers," to a cultivation of the sense of God's presence, as of One with whom we personally have to deal, before whom we ourselves stand, each as a single soul that must say to Him, "My God, I am Thine." This first. Then next, it is obvious that the conscience must be examined, to see whether any cherished sin is the cause of our want of spiritual insight, is keeping us off from closer relations with God, or, in the Prophet's phrase, is "separating between us and Him."² And one point more, which will surely come home to us when, as now, the Death-day of our Redeemer is close at hand. Let us try to look at our position in the world of spiritual life, as illuminated by the Passion. The sight of the Cross should open our eyes to the most real of all facts in which a human soul can be interested. "The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me."³ Let us face and grasp that thought; it will best help us to "see" God, and our own true selves as before Him; and then we shall better understand why such a sight produced in Job that energetic "self-abhorrence" which made him "repent in dust and ashes," whereupon, it is written, "the Lord accepted Job."

¹ Newman, Sermons, i. 115, ff.

² Isa. lix. 2.

³ Gal. ii. 20.

SERMON XI.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST A BOND OF FELLOWSHIP.

“For we being many are one bread, and one body : for we are all partakers of that one Bread.”—1 COR. x. 17.

It is usual, on this one evening of the week devoted to the contemplation of our Lord's sufferings, to turn aside for a brief space, even from “that great sight,” and to fix our thoughts on a subject which, beyond all others, is characterised by a solemn and beautiful calm. For this is the day¹ on which we celebrate the institution of that supreme ordinance, in which its gracious Founder has concentrated whatever in His Gospel is most transcendent and most vital—the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. The day was sometimes called of old, with a touch of Christian poetry, “the Birthday of the Cup” of salvation ; and in its service, before the words of institution, the priest said, “Who,

¹ Maundy Thursday.

on the day before He suffered, *that is, to-day*, took bread."

When we think of the Holy Eucharist, and especially when we put aside the controversies which have unhappily disturbed its atmosphere, we feel that we have entered into the very sanctuary of God, and are standing beside the very hearth-fire of our religion. It is the Sacrament of Life; for by it, pre-eminently, Christians attain to that life in God which He bestows and sustains, who, being the Word, is Life,¹ and is the quickening Spirit in His character as Second Adam. It is the Sacrament of Love; for in it we find Him most fully and intimately brought near to us, who, as on this sacred night, "having loved His own that were in the world," showed how He could "love them unto the end." And it is also the Sacrament of Fellowship; for the truest comment on its purpose and efficacy, as uniting us to Christ our Head, and to each other in Christ, is found in those words of His prayer as Intercessor or High Priest, solemnly offered to the Father after the first celebration of this feast, "That they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one"—or rather, "into one,"—and "that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

¹ See Cyril Alex., Ep. 3 to Nestorius.

It is on this aspect of the Blessed Sacrament, its function as a bond of Christian fellowship, that I desire now to say a few words. It is not, of course, the highest aspect of the gift which our Lord, as at this time, left to His faithful people; for, primarily, this is "the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." In some most true, although mysterious sense, the bread which we break is the Communion of Christ's Body, the cup of blessing is the Communion of His Blood. We therein partake, through consecrated elements, of the essential life of His glorified Humanity, who, as God the Word, and as the Second Head of our race, is a Fountain of spiritual life to all who so accept Him. He has thus provided us with a fulfilment of His own words, which were spoken just one year before the institution of this Sacrament, and received their interpretation from its institution, "Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you." But when we have fairly apprehended this high truth, we can see how there flows from it the further truth, that such participation of Christ binds the partakers in a closer fellowship of love, even as St. Paul in the text must be understood to argue. He has been

warning the Corinthians against taking part in feasts connected with the worship of Greek idols. The idols, indeed, were mere dead images ; but the worship was allied with so much evil that the powers of the kingdom of darkness stood, as it were, behind it, and used it for the ruin of human souls. You cannot, therefore, he says, frequent such rites without coming into contact with these foul spirits, just as, in the case of Jewish sacrifices, the worshipper came into contact with the true God, and as, in the great Christian rite, the bread and the cup are the Communion of Christ's Body and Blood. "For we, who are many, are one bread, one 'body;' for we all partake of the one Bread." His thought may be put into this form: "I say this about the Cup of blessing and the Bread, and you will follow me if you consider how we are wont to call the Church Christ's body" (so, you remember, he calls it when he says, "Ye are a body of Christ," or, "the Church which is His body"¹). "Why is it," he seems to ask them, "that we give this title to the Society which He has founded? Because to partake of the Bread is, according to His own solemn words of institution, to partake of His Body; and we do partake of it as such, and so, by taking it unto ourselves, may be said to become a body of Christ." Thus, according to

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 27; Eph. i. 23.

St. Paul, it is because the Church is fed on Christ's Body Sacramental that it possesses the character of His body mystical. It is His life, received in Sacramental participation, which pervades the Church as a whole, and causes her to be, in this sense, "one bread and one body;" we are so, the Apostle tells us, "because we are all partakers of the one bread."¹

It is well to see these things in their authentic Scriptural order. The great social blessings which Christianity has given to the world are then only understood in truth and fulness, when taken in connection with the Divine facts which it has revealed. Out of those facts they grow; apart from those facts they would lose their special potency and charm. The Sacrament of Christ's Body and Christ's Blood is so powerful a bond of our Christian corporate life, because, in the first place, it so really joins us to Him. It is the felt sense of "the benefits which we receive thereby" which makes the tie so strong between those who share in them together, by virtue of their joint partaking in what the Church calls its "inward part," from which those benefits flow. From this point of view, we see how it serves as the completest answer to all those aspirations which, from the outset of history, have arisen from the purest and highest souls,

¹ Cp. St. Chrys. *in loc.*; St. Cyril Alex. on St. John, b. x. c. 2.

craving for unity, for fellowship, for brotherhood. Men have felt that they ought to draw together, that two were better than one, that a threefold cord was not quickly broken; efforts were made to establish harmony of action—efforts too often made on a false principle, and tending rather towards Babel than towards “the city that is at unity with itself.” But still they witnessed for a real need; and meantime, within one chosen race, provision was made for something like true fellowship; and at last, after faithful souls had been through long ages persistently clinging to the hope of a coming Redeemer, refusing even in dark times to give it up, and keeping it pure when coarser minds had practically secularised it,—at last, for the consolation of true Israelites, He came, the Son of the Virgin, the Incarnate Salvation, the Prince of Peace, the centre of unity for men as men, the one true Lord of a vast universal company, including Greek and Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, male and female, all one in the one Christ, all baptised into one body, all made to drink into one Spirit, pressing forward with one hope and faith, in filial dependence on the one universal Father.

And now, to make this thought more practical. Perhaps the very vastness of the idea of Christian fellowship interferes somewhat with our due estimate

of its blessedness. Let us begin nearer home. The love of family and of friends is what we start with, in order to reach the love of country, or the love of all mankind. So it is in the spiritual order. Here, too, God has given us a clue, so to speak—has placed us within an interior circle, which we are to contemplate first, and so train our eyes for appreciating the wider prospect. Let us think, therefore, of this Sacrament, “the holy Bread of eternal life and the Chalice of everlasting salvation,” first as the means of a real and unique participation of Christ as Lifegiver, and then as a bond of fellowship between ourselves and those with whom we live, and worship, and receive from His altar no ordinary gift, but the Presence of Him who is all in all. Let us see how, in regard to these, this same Communion is the true preservative of the most precious and lasting intimacy. It is well worth remembering that the time at which our Saviour and Lord established this rite for our perpetual observance, and bequeathed us this gift in which all His love is summarised, was that at which His specially loved disciple is depicted to us as leaning on His breast. You who have the blessing of kindred and friends increased so richly by that spiritual oneness of heart which flows from a common faith and a common aim heavenwards,—you who can enter into the deep, sweet

words of a great saint and teacher, "He alone cannot lose any that are dear to him, to whom they are all dear in Him who cannot be lost,"¹—will you not resolve to use this sacred Feast as the best means of consolidating those spiritual bonds and harmonies which He who understands us, as He has framed us, has willed to be such signal helps in our journey to the kingdom of true peace, the "dear, dear country," the home where all shall "be one in Him"? Let each Communion be an occasion of special prayer for all whom you love, and who love you in Christ, that they may have an interest in that great pleading of His Sacrifice, which corresponds to His heavenly presentation of Himself;² and ask that He who there and then gives to us the Bread which makes us to be "one body," will be Himself the everlasting bond of all your relations to each other, will do for each of you what He sees to be the best, and draw you, by the cords of His sympathy and His self-sacrifice, "nearer day by day, each to his brethren, all to God."

¹ St. Augustine, *Confessions*, iv. 14.

² Our Lord's Presence in heaven, as the Lamb that had been slain, involves a self-presentation which is no repetition of the Sacrifice of His death, but a continuous intercession on the ground of its perfect efficacy. The same may be said of the presentation involved in His Sacramental Presence.

SERMON XII.

“ECCE HOMO.”

“ Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the Man!”—ST. JOHN xix. 4, 5.

THIS is the well-known scene of the “Ecce Homo.” The Prisoner, crowned and robed in scorn, and bleeding from the horrible infliction of the scourge; the Roman governor pointing Him out with a genuinely compassionate purpose; the chief priests and their officers taking the lead in the fierce shout of “Crucify Him;” what a scene it is, how full of awe, of pathos, and of teaching! Let us take only one point—who it was that said, “Behold the Man!” and what is the significance of the part which he took in the great tragedy of the Crucifixion.

What a destiny for a Roman governor of a Syrian province, to have his name ineffaceably branded throughout the long ages of the history of Chris-

tendom! What would he have said if he could have known that, simply because of his conduct in a few hours of a single day at the great annual Jewish feast, thousands on thousands, day after day, in every region of a world far larger than he knew of, would profess their belief in that one Victim of Jewish animosity, "who suffered," or "who was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate"? There is this, first of all, to be observed; that his previous acts had not been those of such a man as the Pilate of the Passion. One famous Jewish writer of that age calls him "wilful, inflexible, relentless."¹ Bishop Pearson hands on that estimate in the words, "A man of an high, rough, untractable, and irreconcilable spirit."² He had shown this repeatedly, by insults to the religious feeling of the strong-willed and dangerous people whom he had to govern in the name of Cæsar, and even by a slaughter in the very Temple-court. Now, remembering this, let us look at him, as he bears himself on that fateful Friday morning, when he was suddenly called upon to encounter the supreme crisis of his life.

One does not see in his behaviour on this occasion

¹ Philo, Legat. ad Caium, c. 38.

² On the Creed, i. 341. Bishop Ellicott modifies it, Huls. Lect., p. 350.

any trace of the tyrant. Until nearly the very last he shows a genuine anxiety to do justice. His first impulse is to get the matter off his hands. "Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law." The chief priests are prompt with their answer. The crime charged is a case of constructive rebellion, a matter quite outside their province; it calls directly for the exercise of the ordinary jurisdiction of the secular authority as representing the emperor. Pilate thinks he will understand things better if he holds a private interview with the Accused. He thus elicits the fact that the royal claims of Jesus are not secular; he does not pretend to enter into that strange, mystic language about "witnessing for the truth," but he feels quite clear as to the point in hand; the Prisoner is a harmless enthusiast, political crime is wholly out of the question. The mention of Galilee, in the fierce exclamation of the chief priests, "He stirreth up the people," is caught up by Pilate as helping him out of a difficulty. The tetrarch of Galilee happens to be in Jerusalem; he may shift the responsibility on to the shoulders of Herod Antipas; it will be policy to pay respect to his jurisdiction, and he himself has enough of Galilæan blood on his hands. The expedient is tried, and fails; the Prisoner is sent back to Pilate; the

difficulty again stares him in the face. But the people are demanding the usual favour of the release of one prisoner, to be chosen by themselves, because of the Passover. Surely they will give this poor innocent man, a fanatic at the worst, the benefit of the custom. No—and at this point all the four forms of the history combine—they prefer, decidedly, one who had been arrested for insurrection and murder, whose name (it is strange) meant "son of the father;" who, although a robber and a man of violence, was probably animated by so-called patriotic aspirations.¹ What, then, is to be done with Jesus? They all—all with one voice, the voice of a nation determined on spiritual suicide—answer, "Crucify Him!" Pilate tries another plan. Perhaps they will be content if Jesus is well scourged. The infliction, no doubt, went against the feeling and conscience—we *must* say, conscience—of the governor, who clearly knew a "just person" when he saw him. And after it is over, he utters his "Ecce Homo," as if to say, "You see in what condition He is now: will not this content you?" Not in the least. The shout of "Crucify!" is reiterated; it is added that Jesus had incurred death for blasphemy, had the priests been ordinarily competent to carry out their own law, "because he

¹ Trench, *Studies in the Gospels*, p. 293.

made Himself the Son of God." The Son of God! A sudden thrill of fear, caused by that mysterious phrase, causes Pilate to hold a second private conference with Jesus, which ends in further efforts on his part to persuade the popular leaders out of their thirst for innocent blood. Quite useless,—worse than useless,—for they bring forward the clenching argument, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend." They knew the way to the privy council of a sovereign whose anger was death; and they knew the way, on that very account, to the weak side of Pilate's will. After one bitter, sarcastic question, "Shall I crucify your King?" meant, clearly, to vent his own vexation at being coerced by their persistence, he washes his hands in token of intense repugnance,—but he "delivers Jesus to their will." "Judas and Caiaphas may plan; it is Pilate who must execute."¹

"Behold the Man!" So Pilate had said when he intended, if he possibly could, to get rid of the case, and not to stain his hands with legal murder. But did it profit Pilate that he beheld that Face with respect and pity, that he tried to evoke compunction in those stony, infuriated hearts? No, it did not—it could not. Why did he, after all, give way? Why

¹ A. P. Stanley, in a sermon in University College Chapel.

did he lack that firmness and faithfulness, without which mere physical contact with the Holiest was a thing of no value? He excites our human interest—yes, at this distance of ages, our compassion; for we see in him good feelings, just instincts, struggling for successful self-assertion. They failed, because his old evil deeds "found him out,"¹ tied his hands when he most wanted to be free, made him afraid to do what was right. And here is the moral of Pilate's story. What if any former sins of ours should have hindered us from taking part with Christ, and beholding Him with the gaze of a steadfast loyalty? What if they should have obscured our apprehension of the "truth," and made us fatally fertile in attempts to evade plain duty, even to the point of persuading ourselves that circumstances were too strong for us? If it has ever been so, let us look to Him now, the Crucified and the Risen, and beg Him to forgive us all the evil of bygone years, to set our wills in a straight line with His, and give us grace, in the days that yet remain, to speak, think, and act as "beholding" in Him "the Man" who is our God and our Saviour.

¹ Numb. xxxii. 23.

SERMON XIII.

THE OFFERING OF THE WILL.

“Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God.”—HEB. x. 7.

THE Epistle of this great day¹ contains, in these words, a quotation from one of the Psalms of its morning's service. What is the point of the Psalmist's words, considered as his? He begins his song in a strain of buoyant thankfulness, as one who has had experience of prayer answered, who has been lifted up, as it were, out of a “pit,” out of “mire” in which he had been sinking; his “feet are set on the rock,” his lips are free to break forth in praise. And now he has to tell what he has learned in the hour of affliction. He has gained a fresh and vivid perception of God's purposes in regard to himself personally, and to others whose condition has been like his. “Many are Thy thoughts which are to us-ward. Thou carest for us: Thou hast intentions in regard to us.

¹ Good Friday.

I see it better now ; but I also see that it is ‘ a scheme imperfectly comprehended.’ Thy counsels, which are faithfulness and truth,¹ are more than I am able to set forth in complete and ordered series. Something I do understand and can express, but not all.” What is that something? He proceeds to state it very boldly, in that form of Biblical speech which, looking at two things, appears to exclude and set aside one of them, by way of intimating that the other is more important. (There are several instances of this way of speaking in Scripture.²) So it is here ; “ In sacrifice and meat-offering Thou hast no pleasure ; burnt-offering and sin-offering Thou hast not required.” What, then, if not these ? “ Mine ears hast Thou opened ” (as Isaiah puts it, “ The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious ”³). “ Then said I, Lo, I come (in the roll of the book ”—that is, “ in the book of Thy law ”—“ it is so prescribed for me,) to do Thy will, O God. Yes, I delight in doing Thy pleasure : yes, Thy law is written deep in my heart.” He does not mean that the rites of worship, ordained by that same law, and practised by all his forefathers, are valueless in God’s sight ; he means that they presuppose, that they involve, a spirit of willing devotion ; and that if

¹ Isa. xxv. 1 ; cp. Ps. xxv. 10 ; cxxxix. 17.

² *E.g.* Hosea vi. 6 ; Ps. li. 16 ; John vii. 16 ; xiv. 24.

³ Isa. l. 5

that spirit is absent, their fulfilment, however exact, becomes a dead formality. And in the Epistle to the Hebrews this comparison between sacrifices and offerings for sin on the one hand, and the doing of God's will on the other, is made to point onwards towards that great Sacrifice of "the body of Jesus Christ,"¹ which is the antitype of all the ancient sacrifices, and the consummation and perfection of that surrender of the will which underlay and vitalised the forms of Hebrew worship.

Let us think for a few moments of the awful event of this day, from this special point of view—that it completed the lifelong union of the will of the Incarnate Son with the will of the Eternal Father. It is very remarkable that the Evangelist who speaks most pointedly and fully of the Godhead of the Son, is the Evangelist who records such words as, "My meat is to do the will of Him Who sent Me, and to finish His work;"² and again, more wonderful still in their expression of this high truth, the words wherein our Lord actually explains or illustrates His own readiness to receive and in no wise to cast out those who come to Him, by the fact that He "came down from heaven, not to do His own will" as a thing apart, "but the will of Him that sent Him."³

¹ Heb. x. 10.

² John iv. 34.

³ John vi. 38.

The union of the will of the Son with the will of the Father is, in two respects which touch on Christian doctrine, a fact to be perpetually borne in mind. First, because a serious misconception, which has proved most perilous as a stumbling-block, exists, although less widely than it once existed, in the minds of people who really mean to believe aright as to the atoning efficacy of the Passion. They vaguely imagine that the Father is all justice, and the Son all love; that the Father had to be persuaded by the Son to accept an atonement for us. They have got hold of a truth by the wrong end—the truth that between God and men sin had created a real barrier, because God is the moral Ruler of the world. But, at the same time, it is true that, as the Father and the Son are of one essence, so They are of one mind and one will; that mercy and justice belong to Both; and, particularly, that the Father is repeatedly affirmed to have “sent” and “given” the Son because of His own love for man. He “so loved the world that He gave the Only-begotten,” that He “sent the Son as the propitiation for our sins.”¹

And then again, when we look at the condescension of that Son to our humanity, we have to recollect that He became truly and thoroughly man. His Person,

¹ John iii. 16; 1 John iv. 10; see Dale on Atonement, pp. 167, 343.

indeed, could not but remain single, and therefore simply Divine; but He assumed into the unity of that Person a true human nature, so that He could exist and act in a human sphere of being. Therefore He must have had, as the Catholic faith teaches, a human will, as belonging to His human nature. If it be said, as it has been said, that a human consciousness and a human will involve a separate human personality, we may answer that this is true in other cases, but not in the one case which has no parallel, because God could keep the manhood which He "appropriated"¹ from belonging to any one but Himself. His Personality could dwell in His Godhead, and yet could employ the manhood as a distinct medium of operation. He could remain the same that He had been from eternity, and yet could adopt human sensations, and go through a human experience. And we are all the more likely to realise this fact, as we apprehend the continuous oblation of His human will to that Divine will, which was one in the Father and in Himself as God. Then we see Him, in the words of the text, coming to do the Father's will, rejoicing in it, finding, so to speak, His food in it, regarding the close of His earthly career as a finishing of the work which His Father had given Him to do.

¹ Cp. St. Athanasius, *Orat.* iii. 33; St. Cyril Alex., *Schol.* 8, etc.

And now just a word or two in conclusion, by way of applying this truth to ourselves assembled together, in spirit, before the Cross of the great Sacrifice. It may be that some of us do not feel, as it were, quite up to the mark for these Good Friday services. We have come to church, perhaps, with spirits somewhat overclouded; it does not seem easy to be fervent; we are partly afraid of finding ourselves rather chilled than enkindled. There may be a variety of causes for this state of feeling. It is distressful to us; we do not like to speak of it to others; we wonder, perchance, whether we can get ourselves to feel as we should wish; we are tempted to try experiments, to galvanize ourselves into a temper of devotion. Let us *not* try to do so; let us take a different course. In the words of one who in his day was an experienced guide of souls,¹ "Whatever helps us to patience and humility contributes more than anything else to our spending Good Friday well." Emotions "come and go;"² they cannot be forced, and cannot be relied upon. Our best plan will be to make an act of the will, and leave the feelings to themselves, or rather, to God. An act of the will—offering itself up, simply, loyally, unreservedly, to the will of Him who died

¹ Memoir of James Skinner, p. 338.

² Newman, Sermons, i. 185.

for us. Such an act is possible, for grace, as a movement of the Holy Spirit on the inward being of a Christian, enables, though it does not compel, the will to respond to its reanimating touch. We can, if we please, by using that Divinely imparted strength, perform this act of loyal self-surrender. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O Christ. O my Lord, I give myself to Thee: make what Thou wilt of me: only let this remembrance of Thine unreserved self-oblation assist me, wretched and unworthy, to be more truly united to Thy most dear and blessed will, who art my King, my Redeemer, and my God." And then, when this has been heartily said, let us take in hand the next piece of duty, be it small or great, and try to do it as well as we can, in conformity to that type of filial obedience which the Son of God exhibited in the days of His self-humiliation, and consummated, as at this time, in death, even the death of the Cross.

SERMON XIV.

EASTER JOY, AND ITS EFFECTS.

“After two days will He revive us : in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight.”—HOSEA vi. 2.

It is a strange, and at first sight, hardly intelligible fact, that on the first Easter Even the chief priests and Pharisees appear to have remembered the Lord's assertion, that on the third day He would rise again, better than did His own followers themselves. Nothing can be more certain, on the very face of the Gospel story ; and nothing can be much more valuable as a piece of evidence, than that the men who had clung to and trusted Jesus had practically lost sight of that assurance which should have saved them from despair. For they *were* in despair ; they “trusted” once “that He would redeem Israel,” but they were as far as possible from expecting to hear that He had risen again. They were in no mood to fancy that He was alive, to mistake “visions” for the reality of His presence, to catch eagerly at the tidings brought, as

some would now express it, by "an enthusiastic female devotee."¹ It must be a mistake; it was too good, by a great deal, to be true; it was an "idle tale," the result of a fond hope, which, after so recent and so terrible an experience, they, at any rate, could not make their own. Thomas did but continue so many days longer in the state of mind which on Easter morning, and for nearly the whole of Easter day, was common to others as well, and from which St. John was the first to emerge. Even when Jesus stood among them on that evening, where the doors were shut, some at least, we are told, still "believed not for joy." The fact was, that the shock of the Crucifixion was so much greater and more crushing than anything which they had imagined beforehand that it had bowed their hearts quite down, stricken their faith with paralysis, and driven out of their memories the promise that He would rise again. Even after the Last Supper, they did not "take in," as we say, the thought that His death was at hand. When He was arrested, the fact crushed them; they fled, all but two, and one of those two "denied Him thrice." They did not say, "He warned us of this, and He also told us of a triumph which should follow

¹ Against the "vision-theory," see Godet, *Defence of Christian Faith*, E. T., p. 68, ff. Edersheim, *Life of Jesus*, ii. 624.

it." Apparently they lost all thought of what He had said; and when He actually died on the Cross, they gave up the whole cause in sheer despair. Even on the Easter morning Peter and John "knew not," in a practical sense, the Old Testament "Scripture" which had been interpreted by His own reassuring words. All had been blotted out of their minds; nothing had survived the collapse of hopes which had been formed by the experience of His superhuman power, and had fortified them, at the time, against the impression which His considerate warnings were intended to produce.

At last, at different times on that ever memorable Sunday, the Apostles—all but one, who happened to be absent—did fairly grasp the fact that Jesus had verily risen again. It was *not*, after all, too good to be true. The Lord had been slain, had been buried,—those facts were certain; but here He was with them again. His return in actual bodily life impressed itself upon their senses, as a fact not less tangible than the event of the Friday afternoon. What a revulsion of feeling it must have been when those who had heard of the careful and costly burial, and knew that the chief priests had been enabled to "make the sepulchre as sure as they could" (words which we read with exultation on Holy Saturday), became convinced by

the evidence of the senses that the Lord was risen indeed! It was well for them that they had passed through that prostration; they could appreciate the height to which so suddenly they were raised. "He brought them out of the horrible pit" of hopelessness. And they were thus the better able to proclaim the Risen Christ to others, who at first would be sure to say that such a victory over death was impossible. They insisted that it was possible, for they had had proof that it had occurred, and they were not likely, in such circumstances, to mistake an illusion for a proof, to build such lofty confidence on a basis which could bear no scrutiny. Certainly we cannot wonder that men who naturally shrunk from the risk of being misled, of entertaining hopes and then encountering disappointments, should in all ages have been slow to receive this great affirmation, on which the Apostles, and especially St. Paul, rested the whole structure of Christian teaching and belief. If Christ had not literally and actually been raised again from the dead, Christianity was a mere figment; "the faith of Christians was vain; they were yet in their sins." But St. Paul, writing about a quarter of a century later, in a strain most unlike that of a credulous fanatic, could seriously point out the cases in which Christ had been recognised as "alive after

His Passion by many decisive proofs.”¹ Not to speak of Apostles, there were living, when he wrote, so he positively affirms, more than two hundred and fifty persons who could testify that they had thus beheld Him.² It was *not* “too good to be true,” although it had seemed so at first. And, in days when the Resurrection is discredited on the general ground of the incredibility of all miracles, it may be useful for us to see how the real truth of this most glorious of all events comes before us not simply as an isolated wonder, but as connected with, as the crown of, the manifold revelations which we associate with the Name of Jesus Christ. Undoubtedly, if a person has no predisposition, or, if you prefer the term, preconception, in favour of the idea of a benignant and righteous God, who would be likely, for a high moral and spiritual end, to overrule the action of even such a law as death, he will promptly have recourse to theories of “hallucinations,” will remark that St. Paul had loose ideas of evidence, will trace the “legend” up, with a sort of dogmatic confidence, to a wild fancy which

¹ This is the force of St. Luke’s phrase in Acts i. 3.

² 1 Cor. xv. 6; see Liddon’s *Easter Sermons*, i. 165. It is to be remembered that before Saul’s conversion there was in existence a definite and energetic mass of belief in Jesus as Risen and as the Lord, which he had deemed it his duty, as far as he could, to stamp out by persecution.

spread like a disease. Yes; but given a living God, and given a Christ, we have an antecedent even for such a consequent, a basis strong enough to support such a structure. The faith in Christ risen is the fitting consummation of faith in a real God. It commends itself to us when we think of the Eternal Truth and Goodness, which might well reveal itself in plenitude of light by this grandest of all triumphs over evil; it joins on to, and confirms our highest ideas of the moral character of the Perfect Being; it displays Him as decisively on our side, when we desire that good may prevail over evil, in ourselves and in the world around us. And so that "thought of God" which, in its vast, calm, tender strength, is the only true "stay of the soul,"¹ is felt to be then most powerfully present with us when we seriously and thankfully, especially on the morning of this "Queen of Sundays," profess our belief that Jesus Christ rose again.

"The Day of Resurrection," as one of our most inspiring Easter hymns expresses it—"the Passover of gladness, the Passover of God!" Easter prayer, it has been well said, is joy, and Easter joy is prayer.²

¹ Newman, Sermons, v. 313, ff.

² "O brothers, prayer is joy,
And joy like this is prayer!"

Yes; and it should be also resolution. Here is a point for us to think of. Merely to indulge in what may be called the high spirits of a festival solemnity,—simply to throw ourselves into a stream of exultation, even though it may be a stream of devout thankfulness,—is not safe for such as we are.¹ Easter must brace us as well as kindle us. Our Collect teaches us well when it leads us to think of “good desires,” and to pray that they may be “brought to good effect,” so that we may be practically all the better for the multiplied Alleluias of this day. We, too, must have our part in the new life; as Hosea says in the text, which indicates rather than expresses the interest of sinners in their Saviour’s Resurrection, we ourselves may be, and ought to be revived. Revived from what? From such a state of mind or habits as Scripture calls spiritually “dead.” “Dead works”² mean, plainly, a system of conduct not animated by a sense of God’s presence, or of our duty to Him. Surely we might try, in the light and strength of this our highest festival, to put more of sacred life into our ways of going on,—to do common things as to God and for God, to bring the glory and charm of Christ’s Name into our everyday employments, to rise in thought and aim from our low levels, and to be

¹ See Liddon, *University Sermons*, i. 251.

² Heb. ix. 14.

positively and actively at work in our Lord's cause. Thus will this day of golden opportunities be a day of new beginnings, of new resolves, of new efforts to "walk in light" as redeemed from the bondage of corruption, and as endued with that "power" of His life-giving Resurrection which it is our chief privilege effectually to "know."¹ It has been truly said that "the Resurrection of the Lord is not only the type" of our moral resurrection from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, "but also the incentive thereto, and the power to effect it."² And again, that "*this* makes strength possible for us—'the inworking of the mighty power which' the Father 'inwrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead.'"³

¹ Phil. iii. 10.

² Oosterzee, *Image of Christ in Scripture*, E. T., p. 325.

³ Bishop Alexander, *The Great Question*, etc., p. 136.

SERMON XV.

RETAINING EASTER GRACE.

“And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went : and He made as though He would have gone further. But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us : for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them.”—ST. LUKE xxiv. 28, 29.

WE may well be thankful that the Easter festival is prolonged, in one sense, through forty days,—in another and more complete sense, through the octave which culminates on this (so-called) “Low Sunday.” One can hardly, perhaps, account for this name. It may be intended, by comparison, to emphasise the supreme majesty of the Queen of Sundays ; another surmise would make it a corruption of the phrase, “close of Easter,” sometimes applied to this day in old ritual language. The Greek Church has a worthier name for it, “Antipascha”—that is, a day corresponding to the great Paschal Sunday itself, an Easter festival over again. Call it whatever we will, we must feel that it is a day of great gladness, of

rich opportunities. How shall we use it for the best?

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact too immense in its range, too glorious in its consequences, too altogether transporting and beatific, to be at all adequately surveyed within the compass of a single day. We do well to give it at least a week. Even if nothing has happened to distract us on the "Day of days" itself—yes, even if we have been able to appreciate its glory in the spirit of those familiar hymns which express the very heart of Paschal joy,—still we shall be only too thankful to have a renewal of its sunshine; and if, on the other hand, anything has happened to cast a shadow across it,—if some personal trouble, or some remembrance of past sin, has been allowed to abate our enjoyment, we shall now be all the more glad to traverse the sacred ground once more, to rekindle, if it may be, our devotion, to gather up the fragments of Easter thought, and to secure what we can of the joy that ought to be our strength.¹

What is the practical object before us? Assuredly, to retain in our souls, with a view to future effort, and for our comfort and support in days less brilliantly festal, the grace which a good Easter should have won.

¹ Neh. viii. 10.

The special feelings aroused by an Easter service will not, and indeed cannot, be literally perpetuated. It is not a question of emotion, but it is a question of grace. We ought to be spiritually the stronger for having contemplated, in faith, the historical "foundation-fact," as it has been called, of the whole Christian structure; for having sympathised with our Lord in His triumph, and sought from Him a vital interest in the quickening energies of His risen Life. Let us hope that we have, to some extent, learned more from Him of Himself; that our relation to Him has become more consciously personal; and therefore that He is more precious to us, and that we are more anxious than formerly to retain His Presence with us. If so, we can take as our own the words addressed to Him on the afternoon of the first Easter-day by those two companions whom He joined in their walk, and whose hearts, at first frozen under the misery of a total disappointment, began to glow with renewed confidence as He gave them that exposition of the Messianic Scriptures which the Church must have stored up, and of which, perhaps, some echoes are preserved in the writings of St. Paul. "Abide with us," they might well say; they could not bear to lose a presence that had done so much for them, albeit as yet they took Him but for

a stranger—of exceptional wisdom, of rare sympathy, yet still only a stranger, until they recognised Him “in the breaking of the bread.”

How shall we effectively say to Him, “Abide with us, O Thou whom we know to be our Christ, whom we adore as the Crucified and the Risen”?

1. Let us answer, in the first place, By deepening, as far as may be, our sense of dependence on His mercy, and therewith our consciousness of our own sin. Lent is indeed past, but it ought to leave results behind. One of the main lessons of Easter is, to beware of presumption, to mistrust our own steadfastness, to renew our contrition, to realise our profound unworthiness in presence of the gifts and privileges conferred by our union with the Risen Saviour. Let us not lose any humbling or chastening convictions which the penitential season may have brought; let us rather add to them. It is well, it is a duty, to rejoice with the exulting Church of Jesus, because Jesus is “alive for evermore.” But joy, with such as we are, must needs have an element of awe. We must “fear lest we come short” of promises so ample; we must watch and be sober, and not be “high-minded,” remembering how often we have misused this Easter happiness, and fallen back into the indolence, the self-will, the unholiness, out of which

we had seemed in Lent to emerge. In a true sense, it may be said to be "written for our admonition" that, when the Israelites had to "take their journey" onward, after a brief repose under the palm-trees of Elim, they encountered a temptation to murmur, and gave way to it.¹

2. And, in the second place, let us aim at a more thorough consecration of our lives to the service of Him who claims them as His by right, and is able and willing to transform them by His power. Let us try to do more than we hitherto attempted, in the way of pleasing and obeying Him. Cannot we elevate the motives of our conduct? Cannot we bear oftener in mind that He lives and reigns, in His tranquil glory, to intercede for us and to sustain us; that we may have His grace for the asking, and more of it, and yet more, the more we ask; that if we believe in Him as risen, we are thereby bound to rise above a mere secular level of aim and purpose; that there must be, for us, a serious meaning in the call of the Easter-day Epistle, to set our affection on things above, where Christ, our Life, sitteth on God's right hand? Let us add a little to our daily prayers,—accustom ourselves to begin each day by offering it to Him,—give more thought to the familiar verse

¹ Exod. xvi. 1, 2.

which speaks of His "opening of the kingdom of heaven,"—store our minds with holy words which may foster heavenward aspirations, and, at intervals in each day's business, look up to Him for a blessing upon it, and for the help which may enable us to do all things in Him, and for His glory. So will this Easter, by His mercy, prove effectual in drawing us nearer to Himself; it will not wholly pass away, but will abide in solid results of good; and they will be all summed up and concentrated in the increase of loyal devotion to Him whose Resurrection is for us the source alike of renewal and of glory. It is exactly such devotion which St. John, in the Epistle for the day, describes as "the faith which overcometh the world;" a belief not merely in the fact of the Resurrection, but in "the actual energy and life-giving power" of a risen and living Christ.¹ In this faith let us pray, in the words of an old Collect for this Sunday—"Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we who have gone through the Paschal festival may, by Thy bounty, retain it in conduct and life."²

¹ Wace, *The Gospel and its Witnesses*, p. 161.

² *Gregorian Sacramentary*.

SERMON XVI.

THE CONFESSION OF ST. THOMAS.

“And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God.”
—ST. JOHN XX. 28.

THE story of St. Thomas is full of perpetual interest, especially for all whose clear consciousness of the verities of the faith has at any time been overclouded by difficulties or questions as to which they could not at once see their way. St. John, as his manner is, leads up to the scene which is most critical in the career of this Apostle, by pointing out how on several previous occasions the peculiarity of his temperament had displayed itself. It was a sombre, gloomy temperament, ever prone to dwell on the darker side of all possibilities. When Jesus invites the disciples to go with Him to Bethany, Thomas takes for granted that the journey will end in death. When our Lord says, “Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know,” Thomas breaks in, not rudely, but sadly, with his melancholy uncertainties; “We do not know the

whither, and how can we know the way thither?" It is his besetting infirmity, a want of that power of realising the unseen, in which the Epistle to the Hebrews defines faith to consist. And so we know that after the death of Jesus the whole company of the Apostles were prostrated by a shock of despair. They had never taken hold of our Lord's warning as to His death; and so, when it actually took place, they lost withal the remembrance, they forfeited the comfort, of His predictions as to His resurrection. All was over; the cause was lost. They had trusted, but they had trusted in vain. And Thomas represented this attitude of mind in the most marked way. Others, through some of the hours of Easter Sunday, had put aside the reports of the Resurrection as an idle tale; but he persisted in thinking so, after the Ten had been convinced on Easter night. He was sure they had been too easy of credence; their wish had been father to the thought. For his part, he would have tangible proof, and the proof derived from touch as well as from sight. He dared not dispense with this mode of conviction; and so through "seven days" he "dreamed on in doubt alone."

"Seven days of hope and joy untold
For evermore were gone." ¹

¹ *Lyra Innocentium*, p. 109.

He lost the first Easter octave. Then, as on this Sunday, he was with the rest when Jesus appeared. We know what Jesus said to him ; “ Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side ; and be not faithless, but believing.”¹

And then we know what Thomas answered. It is needless to dwell on the miserable evasion which, ignoring the plain language of the Evangelist, “ Thomas answered and said unto *Him*,” would treat the words of that “ answer,” “ My Lord and my God,” as a “ doxology ” addressed to the Father. The point to which I would ask your attention is just this : Why did he say, not only “ My Lord,” but “ my God ” ? To say “ My Lord ” was like what St. John said on a later occasion, “ It is the Lord.” Thomas might, indeed, have “ believed ” sooner ; we may say that he ought to have believed sooner, for he had had time to weigh the evidence which had told so decisively on the others. But now he goes beyond a simple recognition of the fact that his Lord had really risen again ; he says more as to the personal majesty of that Lord than even Peter had expressed, although not more than Peter’s words might imply. He calls

¹ Compare with this the indulgence shown to Gideon’s weak faith, Judg. vi. 36, ff.

Jesus, plainly and unreservedly, his God as well as his Lord. It is quite true that thus "the convinced doubter becomes the deepest believer."¹ But what brings this flash of conviction, so sudden, luminous, and intense? How does he gather strength for this immense leap, so to say, from a depth of despondent unbelief to this adoring, triumphant assurance? The answer is, That moment focussed for him all the rays of light from his past experience of our Lord's character and acts, in combination with His death, and with His resurrection as now ascertained. He saw at once what it all meant; he caught the sovereign truth which underlay it. He understood why the presence and speech of his Master, especially when the brief ministry was approaching its conclusion, had exercised over those who came in contact with it an influence at once so commanding and so attractive; why he himself had been constrained to say, in effect, "If He is resolved to go to His death, our duty is clear—to share it with Him." In a word, the moral and spiritual wonders of such a life, constituting so full a manifestation of Divine glory, became intelligible in connection with so magnificent a triumph over death and the powers of darkness; and the whole taken together, and seen as a unity, was felt to point

¹ Trench, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 43.

to one transcendent fact. No one could be what He was, could do what He had done, who was not really Divine. Thus it is the Godhead of Jesus, the infinite majesty of His Person, which gives atoning virtue to His death, which illuminates the story of His life on earth, which makes His resurrection simply inevitable, and which claims for Him from His believing servants the fullest trust, the deepest loyalty, the most entire and absolute devotion. It has been said that on Christmas Day, as on Good Friday, we "owe to our Lord and Saviour an especial acknowledgment of His Divinity,"¹ as shining through the veil of His marvellous self-humiliation. It is most true; but Easter brings with it another occasion for such acknowledgment, by helping us to understand the Resurrection in the light of the pre-existent glory. He who on the third day rose again from the dead, He who "was raised up by the glory of the Father," while yet He exercised His own "right" to resume the life which He had temporarily surrendered,² was no other than the Only-begotten, God from God, and Light from Light, the consubstantial Son, by whom all things were made. In this, His victory over that dark dominion by which it "was not possible that He

¹ Liddon, *Univ. Sermon*. i. 198.

² Cp. *Rom.* vi. 4 with *John* x. 18.

should be holden" in durance, we see Him "declared to be the Son of God" in the unique significance of that majestic title, and find in this great confession of St. Thomas the underlying basis of Easter worship and Easter joy.

But, then, it concerns us to remember that in taking that confession on our lips, we accept a responsibility of the most solemnly urgent kind. If we say to our Master and Saviour, "My Lord and my God," we ought to mean that we know what His claim is upon us, that it is imperative amid its tenderness, that it cannot be satisfied by a merely emotional homage. The test will come when our feelings are not kindled. Shall we then "carry in our hearts the music" of genuine Easter devotion? Shall we so pass through days not illuminated by a flash of the excellent glory, as to have with us on the plain that Jesus whom we worshipped on the mount? Let us pray that it may be so.

SERMON XVII.

CHRISTIAN THOROUGHNESS.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”—HEB. xiii. 20, 21.

WE are still, in one sense, keeping Easter, although the first fresh exuberance of “Paschal joy” has ceased to characterise our worship. The Church is still, outwardly and inwardly, wearing her robes of festal white. It has been well said that “the forty days through which we now are passing are brighter far than any others in the Christian year,”¹ for those who adore the Crucified and the Risen. But then let us remember that they may be, and ought to be, as fruitful in good to our souls as the forty days which led us up to Easter. The temptation, for most of us, is to lose sight of their practical aspect ; whereas, in

¹ Liddon, Univ. Sermon. i. 251.

truth, they call us to fresh efforts, and supply us with new motives for moral and spiritual energy. "Christ is risen," we ought each of us to say, "and I must do something in consequence; I must rise to a higher level of thought, aspiration, purpose, conduct; the joy of the Lord must be my strength." Have we not all felt the force of that Easter-day Collect, which assumes that the intense gladness enkindled by our yearly day of triumph has produced in us some good desires, and bids us pray that they may be brought to good effect? Have not the Collects of the two following Sundays spoken plainly of serving the Father in pureness of living and truth, of daily endeavouring to follow the blessed steps of our Lord's most holy life? And is it not significant that this Sunday's Collect¹ looks back to the time when converts received baptism at Easter, and bound themselves to a life which should make their profession a reality?

1. And now let us look at the words of our text, the benediction which all but concludes the Epistle to the Hebrews. Does it not gather up into itself all the elements of an appropriate prayer for Easter-tide? You know that it is a very old question, Who wrote that Epistle? and one which cannot, for

¹ Third Sunday after Easter. The collect comes from the (so-called) Leonine Sacramentary: Muratori, Lit. Rom. Vet. i. 301.

want of fuller evidence, be exactly settled, but as to which this, at any rate, may be said, that the writer was of a kindred spirit to St. Paul. Repeatedly does he remind us of the Apostle's way of putting things. Although the absence of St. Paul's name is the absence of what St. Paul has called "the token in all his letters," and although in one passage¹ he speaks in a tone unlike that of the Apostle who habitually laid stress on his own personal communications with his Lord, yet one must not overstate the difference between St. Paul's writings and this Epistle on such matters as faith or the ancient law; and here, in the passage before us, a truly Pauline emphasis is laid on two ideas—on the connection which should exist between belief in a Risen Christ and the conduct of the Christian believer, and on the efficacy of Divine grace as working on the will, and as being in that sense the source of those holy activities which proceed from a will responsive to grace. Consider the deep, condensed, far-reaching force of the solemn intercession, that the God of peace, who has secured to us all good things by that Resurrection of our great Shepherd, which presupposed the establishment of a new and perpetual covenant in His blood as shed on the Cross, might confer on the Hebrew Christians

¹ Heb. ii. 3.

the fruits of this Divine miracle, by putting them in a right condition for carrying out His will in all good works, and thus might show Himself to be the true ultimate Worker in them of whatever was pleasing in His sight, through the same Jesus Christ His Son. Do we not hear an echo of other words—"That as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life;" or, "Work out your own salvation with fear, for it is God that worketh in you both the willing and the working, for His good pleasure"?¹

2. But let us pass from the general to the special. Not only does our text enforce the obligation of answering loyally to the enabling touch of grace, as a consequence of our interest in the Resurrection of Him "by whom grace came," but it lays a peculiar stress on the scope and extent of that obligation. Observe the phrase, "make you perfect in every good work." The word rendered "make perfect" is more than once used by St. Paul (and elsewhere in the New Testament) to express the idea of completeness, thoroughness, full efficiency, or of the restoration of these qualities. Properly, it seems to mean "to put into good working order," and so to readjust what has got out of gear, to repair, to reunite, to fill up,

¹ Rom. vi. 4; Phil. ii. 12, 13.

and so on. The Apostle once uses it just as it is used here, for "filling up the deficiencies of faith;" and St. Peter, in a benedictory prayer, says, still more closely in accordance with our text, "The God of all grace Himself make you perfect."¹ Next, observe how remarkably the text lends itself to reconstruction in the form of a prayer; it might be even supposed to have suggested that type of prayer which we find in our Collects; "O God of peace, who didst bring again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, do Thou make us perfect in every good work to do Thy will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in Thy sight; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord." But do we not feel that, in thus praying, we commit ourselves very seriously? that we ask what, if granted, will carry us a long way, impose on us a great responsibility, and involve sacrifices, perhaps, which at present we do not distinctly contemplate? For we ask to be made Christians in the full force of that term—not, of course, perfect in the sense of "sinless," but in general aim and effort; consistent Christians, thorough-going Christians. Are we prepared for this?

¹ 1 Thess. iii. 10; 1 Pet. v. 10, where R. V. gives a future, "shall Himself perfect you" (καταρτίσει).

3. Too often, people are not prepared thus absolutely to place themselves under the treatment of the Divine Physician of souls. They will take up a bit here, and a bit there, of Christian duty ; will do some things—perhaps, like Antipas under the Baptist's influence, "many things"¹—but they cannot bring themselves up to the point of asking, in good earnest, for help to do all that Christ's service requires of them. They will go, perhaps, near the mark, but not up to it. They keep something back ; they draw a line ; they make reserves ; they act as if they thought that certain religious observances, and certain abstinences from evil-doing, would satisfy their Master,—that He would be content to leave them alone for a great deal of their ordinary secular life. Or perhaps they know better than this ; they admit in theory that if Christ is to be their Lord at all, He must be their Lord for good and all ; religion is, indeed, to them a matter of supreme interest ; only, somehow, they allow a worldly spirit to invade the spiritual area ; they cherish a partisan temper, which they mistake for pious zeal ; they are not very scrupulous as to the means which they employ for an object which they deem sacred. Or they virtually substitute

¹ Mark vi. 20, A. V. See Scrivener, *Introd. to Criticism of N. T.*, ed. 3, p. 582.

mere devout feeling for that obedience, towards which feeling is meant to be an aid ; they will talk of holy things, listen to holy words, luxuriate in festal services, forgetting what one of the Apostles of this day's festival¹ has said about persons who impose upon their own selves, whose religion is vain, whose faith is lifeless just because it is inactive.²

4. Yes ; here is the weak point of many a soul that is fairly well satisfied with itself ; its habitual life is spoilt by inconsistency. Does conscience say nothing to us on this head ? Has not our Christianity been too often a patchwork, a thing of fits and moods, as distinct from a whole with a real internal unity ? If so, why not begin, amid the spiritual glow and fragrance of this Eastertide, to strive after more of thoroughness, more of completeness, more of consistency ? Motives we have, enough, and more than enough to stimulate us in this good endeavour. The absolute whole-heartedness of our Lord's self-devotion, throughout His three-and-thirty years, gave a glorious significance to that sixth " Word " from the Cross, " It is finished ; " and now when we are thinking of His victory over the powers of darkness, and praising God who, through Him, " giveth us the victory," let us remember that no

¹ SS. Philip and James.

² James i. 22, 26 ; ii. 17.

conquest is ever achieved without thoroughness of purpose, without sustained and persevering effort; let the thoughts which centre in Christ's Resurrection take the form of a prayer that our Christian life may be made more coherent, and therefore more true. And let us take home one homely and simple piece of counsel, confirmed by the experience of lives that have been thus blest,—to offer up the employments of each day, as it begins, to Him who can be glorified in all of them; and then, leaning on Him, to face each duty as it comes, to throw ourselves into it, ask to be shown just the next step, and then the next, and so go onward.¹ It sounds very simple, but it has the secret of true progress. We shall go from strength to strength, in reliance on that grace which can work in us, if we will but be true to it, an increasing thoroughness of conformity to the mind of the Master.

¹ Pusey, *Parochial Sermons*, ii. 140, ff.

SERMON XVIII.

THE ASCENSION.

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.”—HEB. iv. 14.

EFFORTS have been made, as we all know, of late years, to recover for this great festival something more of a reverential welcome, of a solemn and devout observance, among the Church-going classes of English people. Is it not a matter of shame that such reminders should have been needed? One might ask whether Ascension Day is practically less eminent, in a spiritual point of view, than Christmas itself. It is the ending, as Christmas is the beginning, of that series of holydays which, if they at all fulfil their office, that is, if we respond to their call on our attention, ought to bring home to us in its several aspects, with vivid force increased by each anniversary, the master-truth on which our Creed rests—that God for our sakes became Man. It is, as

it was called of old in the East, the day of the "Assumption" of the Son of God into the glory of His Father, the day of the "completion of His work as Saviour,"¹ the day of transcendent exaltation for that Humanity which He had taken into Himself. Surely it is a day to be much observed, both on account of the Lord Himself, who now appears as a King putting on His royal splendour, and also in reference to the interests of His redeemed people, for whom, in His Ascension, the everlasting doors were most effectually lifted up.

And yet, we may confess, there are some special difficulties presented by this event, when we contemplate it, ask what it means, consider what it involves. It is not only that, whereas Christmas brings the Eternal into our very midst, the Ascension "parts Him from our sight," hides Him behind the veil of the unseen world; it is also impossible to answer the questions that may be raised as to the actual removal of Christ's human body into "the heavenly places," or, as St. Paul once phrases it, "far above all the heavens."² But can we expect to answer them? It has been well said that "physical difficulties, in such a case, are practically trifling," because we do not understand the conditions of existence attaching

¹ See Bingham, xx. 6. 5.

² Eph. iv. 10.

to that which, as belonging to the Incarnate, is in truth the "body of God;" nor, in fact, do we know, in any full sense, what is meant by "the highest heaven," considered as the scene of our Saviour's glorified life. A foreign writer has pointedly said that "what the Gospels tell us of His glorious body is apparently beset with contradictions just because, in this world, we taste but a little of the powers of the world to come."¹ Nor must we look for the heaven of "God's right hand" among the skies which astronomy has examined, and which, as St. Peter says, "are in the way to be dissolved."² At the same time we are well assured that the Resurrection of Christ carries with it His Ascension; given the one, the other follows: He could not tarry on earth,—He could not but go up on high, that is, transfer His bodily existence into some inmost sanctuary of Divine glory, some central home of eternal power and life. And this is why St. Paul, whose language is so emphatic and exuberant about the fact that He rose again, refers but seldom—although he does, we all know, refer in some heart-kindling words—to that fact which is the complement of the other; why two

¹ Riegenbach, *Vie du Seigneur Jésus*, p. 628.

² "We need to locate heaven without this material system which waxes old and shall perish." Smyth, *Old Faiths in New Light*, p. 347; cp. Wace, *The Gospel and its Witnesses*, p. 167.

Evangelists give no account of the event of Holy Thursday, although one of them presupposes that his readers will be assured that the Son of Man, ascending up where He was before,¹ had gone to prepare a place for all His faithful ones in the mansions of His Father's house above.

The Ascension is thus an exercise of our faith. It is good for us to have our thoughts thus beaten back on themselves; to be reminded that we see but through a glass darkly; to recognise what is implied in that ancient obsecration, "By Thy marvellous Ascension, O Lord, deliver us!" The greatest of Oxford preachers long ago dwelt on this humbling side of the festival, as calculated to awaken wonder and awe, to prostrate us, in keen "perception of our emptiness, before the great vision of God."² Yes, we may well adore Him, who, in the mode of His departure from among us, constrains us to remember that His ways are past finding out; that the very clouds which received Him are but a visible symbol of the mystery which surrounds a Christ who, in His personal being, is the Infinite and the Most High.

2. But if the miracle of this great day makes this

¹ John vi. 62; cp. xx. 17.

² Newman, Sermons, ii. 209; see the whole context.

appeal to our faith and reverence, it is also a fountain of the most serious, yet transporting joy. (1) First, we rejoice when we look back, as it were, from the hill of Olivet to the hill of Calvary. After all, Christ has triumphed. He has not only risen from the sepulchre, He has taken His seat at the right hand of God, "crowned with glory and honour," lifted up "above all principality and might and dominion." (2) Then for ourselves: by ascending on high, He has inaugurated our life everlasting; He has given us an interest in a heavenly inheritance; His presence there, wherever it be, secures to us, if by His grace we will but persevere, a portion in that beatific life, "a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens." Marvellous it is to think how, in the glowing words of a great Father,¹ our "nature," in Him, "passed beyond Angels and soared above the Seraphim, and stayed not until it was seated on the throne, flashing with immortal radiance and beauty." Again, it is cheering to remember how, as a hymn says, He still "in heaven pursues His plan of grace," by His continuous Highpriestly intercession, which operates through that presentation of His once crucified humanity, as a Sacrifice of imperishable virtue, which is involved in the presence

¹ St. Chrysostom, Hom. on the Ascension (Op. ii. 451.)

of the Lamb that has been slain,¹ and of which our Eucharist in this world is a counterpart; or, once more, how the throne of the ascended Christ is for us the throne of all power and all mercy, on which He reigns as our Protector, from which to us, as truly as to the Pentecostal company, gifts of grace perpetually descend,—for each one of us the gifts we severally want, all help in time of temptation, all strength to fight the good fight, to overcome as He overcame, to follow where He has gone before.

3. Do we believe this? Is it, to us, real? Surely for us, as Christians, the Incarnation, which, as on this day, received its crown, is that which interprets life, which illumines the awful future. What follows, but that we should resolve to “hold fast our confession,” or, as it is called in a later passage of this epistle, “the confession of our hope?” That is, let us cling closer to our Lord. It is surely a great thing to be a Christian, to believe in a Redeemer who has gone up on high, that He may be “*in us* the hope of glory;” whose exaltation is a guarantee that “in another state of being, the most wonderful future is within the certain reach of every single one

¹ Milligan, *On the Resurrection*, p. 135, fully recognises this heavenly self-presentation, but as an act of self-dedication, whereas Catholic theology regards it as primarily a pleading of the sacrifice of the Cross.

of us,—that any one that will is intended to have his place in the triumph and blessedness”¹ reserved for those who love this Redeemer. Let us realise more vitally the blessedness of being able to lift up our hearts, the obligation of living as under the eye of a King whose eyes are watching us from His unseen place of glory; whose heart at this moment—we may dare to say it—is thrilled with a longing to bring us one day where He is. This is the upshot of Ascension-thought; “let us hold fast our confession,” let us try to be more loyal to such a Lord. And loyalty means living in this world as those who “look for a better country, that is, a heavenly,” whose highest “corporate life” is seated “in heaven;” it means being industrious in everyday duties, and at the same time endeavouring to walk with God; it means pouring into earthly occupations the glow and the spirit of devotion to His service, who, being God, became man for our redemption, and now, “in the midst of the throne,” is the life-giving Head of our race.

¹ See Church’s Advent Sermons, p. 105.

SERMON XIX.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE
CHURCH.

“He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you.”—ST. JOHN
xvi. 15.

IF we were to ask ourselves whether Whitsuntide was to us as happy a festival (I speak, of course, of religious happiness) as Christmas or Easter, perhaps some of us would, for sincerity's sake, be constrained to answer, “No: somehow I cannot enter so fully into the meaning or spirit of this great Christian anniversary; my heart is not so much enlarged or uplifted. I do not seem to enjoy its services as I can enjoy those which belong to our Lord's birthday, or to the day of His victory over death.” If this be so, why is it so?

Probably for this reason, at any rate,—that the imagination has not so much to picture, the affections have not so much to cling to with a definite grasp, in the solemnity of the coming of the Holy Spirit to abide in the Church, as when we are bidden to con-

template, with wondering and adoring thankfulness, the leading points, the cardinal moments, in the earthly life of the Son of God made Man. The working of the Spirit is peculiarly invisible; our Lord Himself says that it is like "the wind, which bloweth" seemingly "as it listeth;" and the symbols of the Spirit's presence, which appeared at our Lord's baptism and on the day of Pentecost, the likeness of a dove and of fiery tongues, do not speak to us as powerfully as the face of Christ can speak. The thoughts which belong to the Spirit's operation may seem, perhaps, too abstract for us; we try to fix our minds, but still they wander. Is there anything, we ask, that can form and sustain in us a real, solid, distinct idea of what is involved in the great event of Pentecost, and of its interest for ourselves?

I think that we can gain a point of view, from which we may gradually and effectually learn to appreciate, and year by year more cordially to welcome, a festival which is indeed, if one thinks rightly of it, very beautiful, very consoling, very inspiring, a true Day of the Lord, a time for thanking God and taking courage,—if we begin far enough back.

Let us go back, then, for a moment, to the fountain-head of all truly religious conviction,—to the primary fact on which all religion, as such, is based,

—the fact that we, as human beings, are spiritual beings, holding relations with a Father of spirits, Himself the centre of a world of spiritual energy. Do we believe this? Do we really feel sure that such a world exists, higher, deeper, vaster, more awful, more magnificent beyond comparison than this world of which our senses can take cognisance? We know that there are those who tell us that the existence of such a world is a mere assumption which cannot be verified. For them, unhappy that they are, religion is, therefore, impossible. But we, in God's house, on this Pentecostal evening, may take for granted about each other, as about ourselves personally, that no such suicide of the higher life has taken place. We have not silenced the inner voices which assure us that the soul exists, that the soul pre-eminently makes the man, and that by the soul the man can know his God. Well, then, observe that Whitsuntide, more explicitly than any other festival, reminds us of this original truth, the truth about our spiritual being; for it is when we think of the Holy Spirit—"the Giver of life," as our Creed calls Him, the "Creator Spirit," as our hymn calls Him—that we best understand how the spiritual world is administered and organised. He is its principle of life. From the very outset of

man's history, He has been pleading and striving with man, educating, reclaiming, illuminating, leading upwards. Wherever there has been, in any soul, a movement after better things, a craving to get clear of evil, to get hold of goodness, this has been the work of the Spirit, the effect of His strong and tender touch, of His "still, small voice," to which all that is best in human souls must needs respond. O that we could more worthily apprehend the greatness of this work of Divine love, the versatile richness of its manifold, continuous activity, going on steadily and persistently throughout all ages, in all lands, within such thousands of souls, wherever man has been living, thinking, struggling, and the Infinite Pity has been watching from above! And then consider how a special work was carried on by the same Divine Agent, within the bounds of the covenant-people, as lawgiver and prophet and psalmist were empowered to speak, because "the Spirit of the Lord came upon them;" and yet further, how at last the ancient words, which had upheld so many hopes, were fulfilled when the Spirit of the Lord rested in absolute completeness on "the Branch that sprang from the root of Jesse;" when, as a beautiful Eucharistic Collect expresses it, He "gave life to the world by His death, according to the will of the Father, and by

the co-operation of the Holy Spirit;" and when, exalted to God's right hand, "He received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, and shed it forth" as His own royal gift, the crown and consummation of all previous spiritual outpourings, that "the Lord God," the Third Person of the Trinity, "might dwell" permanently in the Church of the Word Incarnate, and make Himself a sanctuary in every soul among the baptised.

Observe here the intimate co-operation between the Son and the Holy Spirit in the economy of grace. It was only by way of compensation for the loss of Christ's visible presence that the Spirit was to come instead of Him. The Holy Spirit, it has been well said, "did not so come that Christ did not come, but rather He so came that Christ might come in His coming."¹ He came to secure this spiritual presence of Christ, whose "entrance into glory" was the necessary antecedent to the coming of the Paraclete, even as that coming was required in order that the whole work of the Incarnate Saviour might have its due effect,—might be explained, illustrated, provided with a sphere of operation. Thus, as the Holy Spirit had presided over the formation of our Lord's immaculate flesh, so did He form the company of believers into

¹ See Newman, *Sermons*, vi. 126.

a body mystical of Christ. So He "took of" the teaching which our Lord had given during His ministry, brought it back into full remembrance, illuminated its far-reaching significance, and vitalised it as a continuous "Word" for the perpetual instruction of the Church. The same law of Divine co-operation holds good in regard to all the means of grace. By them the Spirit unites us to the life-giving manhood of our Redeemer. Baptism is a birth "from water and the Spirit,"¹ and "by one Spirit we are all baptised into one body." And He has always been regarded as the consecrating Agent in the Holy Eucharist—an idea vividly set forth in ancient rites, and still in the rites of two of our sister Churches, by what was called the Invocation on the elements. "Send down," they prayed of old, "Thy Holy Spirit upon us, and upon these gifts now lying before Thee, that He may hallow and make this bread to be the holy Body of Thy Christ, and this cup the precious Blood of Thy Christ, that they may be to us a means of remission of sins, and of sanctification of soul and body."² If we of the

¹ The R. V. of John iii. 5 corrects A. V.

² Abridged from the "Liturgy of St. James." A Roman offertory-prayer of the fifth century attributes the sacramental presence of Christ's Body and Blood to "the operation of the Holy Spirit;" Muratori, *Lit. Rom.* i. 469.

English Church could recover this Invocation in some form, our service would contain a fuller expression of the true spirituality of Sacraments; but we know more than enough to be responsible for the use of our august privilege of access through Christ, by one Spirit, unto the Father.

Such is the mighty and manifold operation of the life-giving Spirit as dwelling in the Church, and in all Christians as its members. May we not look back into our own past, and find there a comment on such language? Assuredly, if we turn over the pages of our own internal history—in a Christian fashion, under the light of Christian belief—we shall feel that there have been dealings on His part with us. We have had our tokens. “In divers degrees, in divers manners,” at crises of life, or in the midst of its ordinary routine, we have heard His voice saying, “This is the way, walk thou in it.” He has been leading us forth, if we would follow; if we have not got farther in the path of peace, the fault is ours. We grieved Him, we tempted Him, perhaps we all but quenched the fire that He had kindled. But now—but now, we would do better; and now, this Whit-Sunday, He speaks to us again.

How shall we make answer? 1. First, let us resolve

to recognise Him as our Paraclete, the Friend and Helper ready at our side, the loving Spirit who "pleads with groanings not to be uttered," who desires, in spite of all our provocations, to perfect His work in us. Let us believe in His longsuffering and goodwill, that we may come to rejoice in His holy comfort. 2. Let us realise His presence in His own sacred ordinances; let us hear His witness, with that of the water and the blood,—the Divine facts of cleansing and atonement as brought home to us in the two great Sacraments of the Gospel; let us so use all the forms of Church worship that they shall be filled with spirit and life, and serve to maintain our fellowship with Him. 3. And then, to come closer home, for a last point, let us ask what is it in ourselves that has hitherto chiefly resisted His influence,—what sin lurks in us that has not been thoroughly repented of, and therefore remains to cancel the effect of grace? He has resources for every need, healing for all forms of moral sickness. He is the Spirit of counsel, who can tell us what we should aim at; the Spirit of wisdom and ghostly strength, of holy fear, of prayer and worship, of love and self-control, of joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. "Under His teaching," in the language of a great hymn-

writer,¹ “nothing is obscure; in His Presence nothing unclean can live. He gives joy to the purified conscience; He stirs up the sluggish mind. The love which He gives makes the heart prone to what is good; and apart from His grace, nothing is really pleasant, healthful, serene, sweet, perfect.” And the same poet bursts forth into a true Whitsuntide invocation—

“Thou, who once, in visitation,
Strength and lofty consolation
To Thy waiting Church didst send,
Visit, if it be Thy pleasure,
Even us, and in like measure,
All who at Thine altars bend.”²

And if we believe that we have thus an interest in His visitations, let us frankly submit ourselves to His strong, sweet influence; let us, especially through this week, and frequently afterwards, entreat His help in the words of that most familiar of all Pentecostal hymns, of which a writer³ has said, that “if the mind goes with the voice, the Holy Spirit cannot but come in His sevenfold fulness of bounty upon those who repeat the lines;”

“Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire . . .

¹ Adam of St. Victor.

² From Philip Worsley's translation of the hymn, *Qui procedis ab utroque*.

³ Daniel, *Thesaur. Hymnol.* i. 214.

Thy blessed unction from above
Is comfort, life, and fire of love :
Enable with perpetual light
The dulness of our blinded sight . . .
Anoint and cheer our soilèd face
With the abundance of Thy grace :
Teach us to know the Father, Son,
And Thee, of Both, to be but One,"—

one in the undivided essence of absolute Godhead, one in the mystery of Divine intercommunion and coinherence, and one, also, in the continuous energy of that love whereby the Perfect Being delights to bestow Himself on the creatures whom He has made capable of enjoying Him.

SERMON XX.

THE HOLY TRINITY.

“And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him ; and they were full of eyes within : and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”—REV. iv. 8.

WE sometimes hear it said that our received Christianity must be revised, or even reconstructed, if it is to have a hold upon the future. Persons who honestly appreciate what they call its moral spirit assure us that, if we will put it into their hands, and allow them to clear it of some encumbering elements, it will secure a new career of healthy influence ; that its form may be altered, but its life will continue ; but that on no other terms can it hope to mould the thought, or guide the conduct, or even command the respect of cultured men. In a word, they say, it must be simplified, or else must die out as a spiritual force, and take its place among obsolete systems and creeds outworn. And this simplifying process is

explained with succinct clearness. Christianity must reduce its theology to a minimum, and thereby purchase a better reception for its ethical precepts, which are now over-weighted and compromised by connection with dogmas uncongenial, or even offensive, to modern habits of thought. We, for our parts, my brethren, may well think that such a programme is at variance, in general, with religious experience, and, in particular, with the structure of Christianity. For a religion, to be strong, must be solid, not fluid ; and if, on such supremely important subjects as the realities of the unseen world, it can give us only hypotheses or sentiments, if it is vague and hazy when speaking about God and our relations to God, it is, for all practical and serious purposes, like water spilt upon the ground. And the Christian Scriptures emphatically associate their teaching about conduct with their teaching about the God who watches over conduct, and has given His own Son to be its pattern. The ethics of Scripture are steeped in its theology ; their motive power is drawn from what is revealed about Him who gives them authority ; and the doctrine, for its part, is best realised when translated into the life. So closely akin, if you consider it, are religious affections to the beliefs which enkindle them ; so poor and shallow is the notion that

the Object of our faith and worship can be best loved and best served when He is thought of most indefinitely.¹ Christianity, in short, must be to the end what it has been from the outset, a theological or doctrinal religion; and if conceivably it could cease to be such, it would cease, in the truest sense, to *be*.

It is on this character of our faith that attention is fixed by the peculiar services of this day. Trinity Sunday is a specially theological festival; it turns our thoughts away from the details of what was once called the "Economy," the Divine plan as carried out in the Incarnation of the Redeemer, to the "most ancient of all mysteries," which underlies and yet transcends the scheme of redemption,—the fact that our God, the one, the living, the Eternal, exists in what, for want of better terms, we call a Trinity of Persons. We associate this mystery with the resplendent imagery of the Patmos vision, which opens for us, in effect, a door into heaven, shows us the throne and the lamps of fire, the four living creatures and the four-and-twenty elders, and makes us hear the celestial Tersanctus, and the response of "Thou art worthy, O Lord." And the Collect, perhaps, from our very childhood, has beyond all others brought home to our minds, with yearly increasing emphasis,

¹ See Hussey's *Academical Sermons*, p. 250, ff.

the majesty of the Christian Faith. And all greatness, recognised as what it is—even any grand physical object, like the open sea viewed from a high cliff—exercises over us a sort of tranquillising power. It overawes, and yet it comforts; its vastness or its strength attracts us; we feel that its presence, for the time, gives us a sense of satisfaction, of repose. Even so, assuredly, is it with any earnest attempt to think of God. That thought is “the stay of the soul.” And, so far, a day specially consecrated to the contemplation of God, as He has revealed Himself in the Gospel, must be a day of profoundest peace, in fulfilment of that promise, ever ancient, yet ever new, sustaining and cheering the spirit of man throughout all ages: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee.”

2. But we may hear it said, “This is sentiment concealing the fact. The Sunday in question is pre-eminently devoted to dogma; and dogma is not associated with thoughts of rest, but rather with the strife of tongues; it does not soothe, it irritates. And *this* dogma is peculiarly connected with controversy; it presents its hard, sharp outlines between us and the calm beauty of God’s love.” But, first, observe that if the word “dogma” is to any ears repellent,—if it suggests, as its use in the New Tes-

tament might suggest, something imposed like a decree or positive ordinance, there is nothing harsh or strange in the essential idea of truth asserted as from God, and stated so as to be held. And what is called dogma is but this, in a single word. And if we believe that the living God, in fatherlike regard to man's deep need of truth for illumination, guidance, and comfort, has really spoken to man by what we call a revelation, we must believe that He has spoken distinctly; else why should He speak at all? And if He has spoken distinctly, and told us something that can be apprehended, though not fathomed, it must be capable of being substantially put into form, and thus brought home to the mind and the heart. In short, revelation must carry with it doctrine, and doctrine practically means a creed. This is the principle. The application of it may, of course, in this or in that case, a hundred times over, be faulty. Opinion may be insisted on as doctrine; or false doctrine, of purely human and earthly origin, may be urged on men as part of Divine truth; or that which is part of such truth may be advocated harshly, narrowly, without regard to charity or to the just proportion of other parts of truth. All this is quite obvious; but it does not in the least affect the principle, which, in fact, is bound up with any

solid and effective Christianity,—let us say, with loyalty to the Eternal Giver of truth; and its acceptance is, in His mercy, well rewarded by the stimulus thus given to “acts of religious worship and obedience.”¹

3. And then, as to those various formal statements which have been brought into the service of the doctrine of the Trinity, by way of indicating both its aspects, the essential oneness of the Eternal Essence, and the real distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; do not all of these run up into what is comparatively a simple proposition—“There is one God, but He exists in Three Persons;” or, “The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God; and yet They are not three Gods, but one God”? All of them seem, in fact, to be absolutely implied in the affirmation, “We worship one God in Trinity,”² that is, as existing in three “personalities.” For instance, if the Son or the Spirit is really God, He is, He must be, Almighty, uncreate, and co-eternal; and to say that He is so is but to say what has virtually been said in the words, “He is God.” And again, to say after St. Augustine, that

¹ Newman, Arians, p. 150.

² The assertion that “the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped,” is found *verbatim* in St. Gregory Nazianzen, Orat. xxv. 17.

“there are not three Almightyies,” or, as St. Ambrose phrased it, “not three Holies,”¹ means simply this, that there are not three Gods. In short, we could not gainsay any one of the sentences which enforce in different phraseology the idea that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, while really and distinctly existing, are yet inseparably one in Godhead, without so far weakening that idea itself. Inseparably one; for the word “Person,” of course, is not used as when we speak of separate individual human persons, but so as to be consistent with that transcendent Unity by which the Son and the Spirit coinhere in the Father as “Fount of Godhead,” and from which our thoughts in this doctrine ought to start, according to the guidance of Scripture itself and of the Proper Preface for this Sunday. It is true for us Christians, as for Israel, that the Lord our God is “one Lord,”—while yet we believe that He is “not one only Person, but three Persons in one Substance;” in other words, that the Son is God, and the Spirit is God, being from, and with, and in the Father. One might illustrate this characteristic of the Athanasian Creed, as it is called (although it has far more of Augustine than of Athanasius²), by observing how,

¹ St. Aug. de Trin. v. 9; St. Ambr. de Sp. Sancto, iii. 109.

² There can be no doubt that the “Quicunque” was compiled by some one familiar with St. Augustine’s language about the Trinity

in the second part of it, the statements as to our Lord's Godhead and Manhood are but "expositions" and "prolongations" of the one fundamental statement, "that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man," or that in Him "God and Man is one Christ." He who believes this, and "worships one God" as existing "in Trinity," does in effect hold all that this confession proposes to him as matter of necessary faith.¹

4. But it may be said, "State the doctrine as you will, reduce it to two main propositions, if you like,—still it is baffling and confounding; it involves, at least, an apparent contradiction; we cannot gain a clear and consistent view of it." Be it so; but neither can we, in this sense, comprehend the co-existence of a human free-will with the Sovereignty of God; we cannot imagine the conditions of a Life which has existed from all eternity; we may puzzle ourselves in the effort to conceive a Being who is One, infinite, and personal,—*"immanent"* as filling all things, yet *"transcendent"* as apart from all things,—yet this, we are sure, is characteristic of a living and true God. If, then, difficulties of this sort do not and the Incarnation, although some of its expressions are echoes from Athanasius, as in verses 7, 24, 32, 35.

¹ See Mozley's Lectures, p. 188; Church Quarterly Review, xviii. 385.

hinder us from being Theists, others of the same class need not hinder us from being Trinitarians. In fact, if we think of the Most High God at all, we shall soon come to see that a God whom our thoughts could grasp and completely comprehend, whose ways were in no sense past finding out, would be but an idol of our mind's invention. That "now we see through a glass darkly," must be the confession of all serious Theists, as well as of those who hold the faith of Christendom.

5. And that faith, my brethren, may say this for itself—that, without it, you could not do justice to the whole sum of Scripture teaching, in regard to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is a sum of various particulars, a result of several combining elements, to which the doctrine of the Holy Trinity—"Catholic" also in this sense—gives utterance in forms which do not profess to be adequate,¹ but which point out the lines in which we Christians may think safely. It may say this—and something more, too, which is not always well-remembered: that without it our idea of God would be lacking in moral and spiritual vitality. We can never think so vividly, so worthily, so affectionately of Him, or seem to get so near a sight of Him, as when we consider that

¹ Cp. St. Aug. de Trin. vii. 7.

within the One Infinite Life itself there has been, from all eternity, this activity of love, this communion of thought and will, this fulness of inward relations, this unspeakable richness of moral perfection:¹ the Father always seeing and imaging Himself in the Son, the Son ever existing in, or, strictly, "towards the Father's bosom," the Holy Spirit proceeding, as our Lord says, from the Father, yet, also, as St. Paul says, "the Spirit of His Son." It may truly be said, that if "God is" essential "Love," this of itself indicates some personal distinctions in the Godhead; and even apart from this, it is clear that without "Trinitarianism" our Theism would be far poorer, far colder, far less able to hold up against adverse forces, and give us strength or comfort. With it, we guard that "sovereign thought" in its full purity and energy, and realise the presence of a God worthy of the name, because so intensely living and loving.

6. And so, in conclusion, can we not see how the "confession of this true faith" should be made practical and fruitful in our lives? To whom do we

¹ See Medā's Bampton Lectures, p. 14; R. H. Hutton, *Essays*, i. 231. Theological students have found in the doctrine of the Trinity a safeguard against Pantheism. It has secured the idea of a will and character in God, and of that moral activity which draws man into relation with Him.

belong? Who made us, who has saved us, who has absolute claims upon us, who will judge us when our trial-time is over? We belong to God the Holy Trinity; we have our portion, as St. Paul's words so frequently remind us, in the grace of the Son, the love of the Father, the communion, or self-bestowal, and indwelling of the Spirit, whereby He imparts Himself to us as members of the Son and children of the Father. We are called to be among those whom the Father will love, with whom the Father and the Son will make Their abode; who have access through the Son, by one Spirit, unto the Father; who have the Spirit dwelling in their hearts, interceding in their prayers, and showing them all the truth of Him who is "the True." What a glory, what a solemnity, what a preciousness should this belief shed over our ordinary life, spent as it is in an atmosphere so charged with blessing! Let us resolve now, when the second half of the Christian year, which is sometimes called the practical portion, is opening upon us, to claim our part in this great store of happiness, by living consciously as in the sight of our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; by offering up each day as it comes, and all our work, and all our interests, to that Holy and Blessed Trinity, whose property is, as an ancient preacher of this truth expressed it, to

be "long-suffering."¹ So, in the ancient form of this day's Collect, our "steadfastness in this faith" may be our "defence against all adversities;" so may we feel the "sustaining, satisfying power of" our "Creed," as "something above us and beyond us, holding us up with a supremely powerful grasp;"² and so may we go forward, with humble and cheerful confidence, to face whatever lies before us, as those who know whom they have believed, and to whom they have again devoted their whole being,—even to Him, the one Lord God Almighty, in whom we live and move and are, whose character and whose gracious purpose towards us are set in full light by the revelation of His Triune glory,—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

¹ St. Greg. Naz., Orat. xxiii. 13.

² Bishop Wordsworth, Bamp. Lect. p. 187.

SERMON XXI.

PERSONAL RELIGION IN CHURCH LIFE.

“O Lord, Thou hast searched me out, and known me: Thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine up-rising; Thou understandest my thoughts long before. Whither shall I go then from Thy Spirit: or whither shall I go then from Thy presence?”—Ps. cxxxix. 1, 6.

WE are told¹ that a Jewish writer has called this the crown of all the Psalms. And certainly, as we read it, we gain a wonderfully vivid idea of two great facts; the reality of God, and the reality of man as belonging to God, and yet as distinct from Him. Nowhere, it has been well said, are the great attributes of God set forth more strikingly; nowhere is there a deeper consciousness of His encompassing, all-penetrating presence; and yet nowhere a more emphatic assertion of the true personal existence of man. The soul is made to stand before the Most High, to apprehend Him as its Maker and its Master, while yet it feels that it, too, is a real being with a “self,” in pre-

¹ Dean Perowne, Commentary on the Psalms, *in loc.*

sence of the eternal Self or personality of the Living God. He is dealing with it; His eye is upon it, observing, watching, judging; His hand follows, sustains, grasps it; though it were to flee into all corners of His universe, it would still be confronted by Him. The soul is not, in His sight, a mere thing; it can hold intercourse with Him, plead with Him, appreciate His claims on its obedience; it can also, if it chooses, disobey Him. What it cannot do is to escape Him, or to understand its own life, its "whence and why and whither," apart from Him. There is a certain freedom assigned to it, within, so to speak, a limited area; but all around is the vast ocean of the Divine sovereignty, as exercised by One who understands His creature's thoughts before they are uttered, even as He presided over the very origin of its life. There are mysteries in human life, from its outset to its close, which only One eye can fathom. Each of us feels that he cannot share his whole experience with any other, that there are depths in his being wherein he must dwell alone; yet not wholly alone, for even there he meets his God. This is the true greatness of man's destiny, the fearfulness and wondrousness of his condition, that he can say, "My God." For to say this is to own that he has an interest in God, while yet he belongs to Him. The Psalmist, to be sure, appears

at first to be simply overawed by the closeness of this relationship; and yet he could not contemplate a fact so tremendous without seeing that it had also a benignant side. If God thus besets, occupies, dominates him, God must surely care about him very much. The very urgency with which the Divine claim is pressed is a guarantee of merciful intentions; and thus, in the words of a true poet, "seeing that he cannot fly from God anywhere, he flies to Him." "How dear are Thy counsels unto me!" Then again, "Try me, and seek the ground of my heart." You see that just because God is so great, so ever-present, therefore the soul casts itself, in uttermost confidence, upon Him. What else can it do? What other resource has it? Here is infinite power, and insight before which the darkness is as the day; and the voice which it hears is that of One who knows all, and can do all, and has rights over it which nothing can supersede. Surely this majesty attracts, this vastness charms. The soul prays that God will make it such as He would have it, and,—one step further,—appeals to Him as to a Friend and Guide. The psalm dies away in tones as sweet and trustful as those which speak of the Lord as a shepherd; "Lead me in the way everlasting." I put myself into Thy hands; do something for me, make something of me; O my God, I am wholly and absolutely Thine.

The consciousness of nearness to God as one's true good (in the words of another psalmist¹), and as, when thus used, the most animating and sustaining of all fellowships, is the very root of personal religion. But has it, you ask, so very much to do with the special purpose of a Dedication festival? Yes, surely, everything. Why do we enjoy such festivals? Because they help us to realise our corporate religious life, as members of the great society of the Church, and specially of some particular congregation which sets forth the Church to us, which is the Church in this or that place. Patriotism, we know, is very enkindling; so, yet more, is the spirit of "Churchly" fellowship. The sense of isolation goes, the fact of brotherhood stands out, larger and larger yet, more satisfying and heart-cheering. We feel that we are free of a noble company, we stand side by side in a great army; sympathy passes from soul to soul, and binds them into one; the old words, so often heard, become freshly significant, "We walked in the house of God as friends;" "I was glad when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the Lord;" "For my brethren and companions' sake, O Jerusalem, I will wish thee prosperity." Our feet are set in a large space; we know how good it is to dwell to-

¹ Ps. lxxiii. 28.

gether. And yet, there is some force in the warning often addressed to us Church-people, "Take care that what you call your corporate religion does not swallow up your personal. You make so much of the Church, that you are in danger of forgetting your own soul, its singleness, its needs, its responsibility, its future. Take care lest the solemn gathering, the inspiring service, the array of Church observances and interests, become gradually a substitute for personal walking with God; lest at the end you wake up to find that you have been too much of a Churchman, and too little of an interior Christian!"

Well, let us seek to profit by all earnest counsel, and see, at any rate, the truth which underlies it. True it is, then, that a Churchmanship of taste, or feeling, or party zeal, if not so common as some think, is yet to be found existing, and is always a source of weakness. If people take up "Catholic" ideas in this way, superficially and self-complacently, that will be a case of salt losing its savour. But whose fault is it? Surely the fault of those who misuse truths that should be for the wealth of their souls, but are thus perverted into occasions of falling. Let us see to it that our Churchmanship is solid, practical, spiritual; let us hold Church principles, as they are called, in connection with our own

souls' life; let us do them the justice to treat them seriously, and then we shall see how they touch us, as Christians, on all sides of our being. They guard us against the moral perils and the spiritual poverty of a popular individualism; but they deepen our sense of responsibility for the privileges which surround us in the visible Kingdom of Christ; they enclose the personal within the corporate; they bring the whole force of God's sacramental ordinances to bear upon the individual heart, and mind, and will. If we would but look at those ordinances as so many points of contact with a very present Saviour,—if we would believe, and act on the belief, that through them a personal Lord is drawing near to us personally, and applying His grace to our needs,—we should then profit better by the teaching of those who, in the last fifty years, have revived Church life in England, and have also been pre-eminent as preachers of conduct, self-training, inward growth; and so, by seeking the Christ of the whole Church amid the circle of His life-conveying instruments, we should find Him, to our unspeakable comfort, a perfect Christ for each individual soul.

SERMON XXII.

SELF-DEDICATION.

“They brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord.”—
ST. LUKE ii. 22.

A DEDICATION festival has always a serious side. We do not spend it aright if we simply give ourselves up to the sweep and rush of high-strung festal joy. Such joy is good, and there are times when it is specially good,—we may say a thing of obligation; but, for creatures like ourselves, there is a perpetual significance in the Apostle’s warning against what is called “feasting without fear.” Easter Day itself, by its Collect, reminds us that it is one thing to entertain good feelings, and quite another thing to carry them out; another thing, to be prayed for and striven for. And so, a festival which by its very name speaks of oblation, devotion, consecration, must needs have a solemn undertone pervading its most exultant hymnody; we must hear and heed a voice which

says to us, "Do you mean this to have a reality for yourselves? Is your intention as to your own life in unison and sympathy with this memorial of the act which gave over your church to the service of the Most Holy? Or are you content that there should be a discord between them? Surely not," the loving urgent voice pleads. "You have come hither—have you not?—with something like a genuine resolve to dedicate yourselves anew, to give up, give over, your hearts and wills to God; to choose Him more absolutely; to put Him more consciously in possession of your whole interior being; to obey that gracious and most fatherly invitation, 'My son, give Me thy heart?'"

Are they not sweet words, persuasive through their tenderness? Why should we draw back from hearing them? Let us consider what they ask of us.

Texts abound in Holy Scripture which go straight to this one mark: God asks from us a single-minded loyalty. "Unite my heart," cries the Psalmist, "to fear Thy name."¹ Over and over again the phrase recurs, "a perfect heart." David bids his son acquire it; the historians speak of this or that king as having it, or as not having it. Its meaning is illustrated in the simple statement that "men of war came with a

¹ Ps. lxxxvi. 11.

perfect heart to make David king in Hebron,"¹ that is, with one simple, resolute purpose, bent on one object,—as we say in one word, thoroughgoing. "David, in spirit," foretells that the people of "his Lord" should be "willing," should be as free-will offerings, "in the day of His power." Hosea describes the moral disease of Israel, "Their heart is divided: now shall they be found faulty;" this is the condition of those whom our Lord calls "hypocrites," who try, in effect, to serve God and the world, whose "eye" is not "single" but "evil," who import self-seeking into the area of moral and spiritual life. Such persons are alien from what St. Paul describes as "simplicity towards Christ,² godly sincerity, faith and love unfeigned;"³ on the contrary, they are double-hearted,—they will go a certain way with God, but they instinctively want to draw a line, within which they may retire at pleasure. They will do several things for Him, at His bidding, but they make certain reserves; they keep Him, practically, at arm's length; they do not like to come to close terms with Him. He may control certain portions of their life, but for the rest—well, they want, if they would speak out, to be independent of

¹ 1 Chron. xii. 38; cf. ver. 33.

² See 2 Cor. xi. 3, R. V.

³ 2 Cor. i. 12; 1 Tim. i. 5; Rom. xii. 9.

Him ; they act as if they would keep out of His way. Like the prophet of old, they run away from His call, make arrangements for hearing less about His claim on them, pay the fare of a ship to Tarshish ; and well for them if the tempest reminds them that, in all corners of the earth, or “in the uttermost parts of the sea,” after all evasions, “His right hand will hold them” in its grasp, He will force them to confront Him, and to hear His “Where art thou ?”

We would not, you say, be like them. We do not need to be told that dependence on God is happiness, obedience to God is well-being. We wish, really and in earnest, to be truthful, honest, loyal, towards our Father and our Saviour ; we do not want, as it has been said in regard to the double-hearted,¹ to be somehow “by ourselves,” to have in the house of our spirit one room, at least, “where God is not.” We would fain admit Him into every corner, not as a guest, but as “Lord and Owner ;” we wish to have no secrets from Him, to be ever welcoming His presence into the inmost sanctuary of thought, feeling, aim, purpose, and affection. We desire to assimilate the spirit of the prayer, that as the Son of God was, in His human infancy, “presented in the temple in

¹ Newman, *Sermons*, v. 226 ff. Compare Bishop Butler, *Sermon on Balaam*.

substance of our flesh, so we may be presented" to the Father "with pure and clean hearts, by the same His Son our Lord."¹ We wish, in a word, to imitate Him in His self-dedication. This is what He means by the request, "Give Me thy heart;" this is true Christian single-mindedness; this is effectual self-dedication and self-surrender,—*this*, nothing less than this.

Now, what shall we do in order to this object?

1. First let us take home the prayer of the Psalmist, "Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me, and examine my thoughts." Let us put our souls absolutely into His keeping, and ask Him to purge them from all insincerity, and fill them with "truth in the inward parts." Let us gather up the whole force of our will into an act of conscious self-surrender: "O my God, I am Thine; I want to be entirely and unreservedly Thy servant, Thy child, Thy instrument, Thy property. Take possession of me, make something of me for Thy service; help me to walk with Thee, and to see all things in Thy light."

2. And with prayer must be joined self-watching. When we are tempted to make excuses to our con-

¹ It has been said that the particular function of the Presentation, considered as a moment in Christ's Mediatorial life, was "to impart virtue and acceptableness to all our correspondent acts of self-presentation and service." Christian Remembrancer, April, 1849.

science, to pass off motives which are not the true motives, to lay the blame on others, or on circumstances, to avoid consulting our own sense of duty, to go, as it has been said, "round about our duty," not quite touching it, not quite coming up to the required mark, acting as if something else would do as well as simple obedience,—or, still more,—when we discover in ourselves any symptom of a tendency to make a compact between our inclinations and our conscience, to presume upon its silence, or to make sure of obeying it better hereafter,—then let us know our danger, and remember that we have promised to give our hearts to the Lord. This it is which makes His commandments not grievous, His yoke light, His service perfect freedom,—this practical renouncing of any selfish interest, this acceptance, in all loyal sympathy, of His purposes towards us; this it is which emphasises and realises the words so apposite for a Dedication festival, "And here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee."

SERMON XXIII.

SIMPLICITY IN THE WORK OF GRACE.

“And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”—
2 KINGS v. 13, 14.

“NAAMAN the Syrian,” you remember, is selected by our Lord as an instance of exceptional favour shown, in the old time, to one who was not of the chosen race. His story has a charm for us from our childhood; and it should be full of lifelong interest, as a vivid picture of human character, and as symbolising some of the methods of the Divine education of human souls. I do not mean to dwell on the concluding scene, which is full of solemn warning to all who are, by circumstances, familiar with sacred things,

but whose hearts have never been purged of worldly selfishness. For the rest, how beautiful is the opening of the tale! The young captive slave-girl, who has evidently fallen into kind hands, utters a word or two of sympathy for her master. If he could but see the man of God in her own land—the land which she will never see again—he could be sure to obtain healing. Thus, as Keble has said, she became an instrument whereby “the healing Name” should “be known on many a heathen shore.”¹ Her words are reported: Naaman consults his king, Benhadad, who sends him with ample gifts to Jehoram of Israel; assuming, of course, that he will issue his orders to the prophet who is said to have such power over disease. The king of Israel, timorous and suspicious, fears that his formidable neighbour is seeking to draw him into a quarrel, by asking him personally to do what was for him impossible: “Am I God, to kill and to make alive?” Elisha reassures him; the Syrian captain arrives, but is not greeted with the observance which he had looked for; Elisha simply sends out word to him to go and wash seven times in the Jordan. Pride, for the moment, prevails in Naaman’s mind over anxiety. “I took for granted,” he says in effect, “that he would at least come out,

¹ *Lyra Innocentium*, p. 236.

and deal personally with me, would call on his God, and wave his hand over the part affected: instead of that, he bids me, by message, to go and bathe in a river. I could have done *that* in Abana or Pharpar at home." He turns away in wrath; and then other slaves of his come forward in a manner which exhibits the condition of domestic servitude, in the old Eastern world, as easier and happier, by far, than we know it to have been in later ages (yes, and must we not add that the relations of master and servant, in Christian households, might often be improved by means of this Syrian example?). These slaves address Naaman as their "father," and gently recall him to his better self. The question, we see, is dexterously shifted. It is not worth while to stand upon dignity, and stickle for compliments; it *is* worth while to do what may promote one's serious object, especially when the advice given can be followed and tested with so little effort. "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he does but say to thee, Wash, and be clean?" The appeal from self-importance to good sense is at once successful; and Naaman, after travelling some thirty miles, finds himself on the bank of the sacred river, which was to become all the more sacred by contact with that

Flesh which could "sanctify water to the mystical washing away of sin." He "dips himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God : and his flesh comes again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he is clean." One need not pursue the story, which illustrates so attractively the grateful and generous temper of the Syrian, and the baseness of the highly privileged Israelite, who, with the Lord's name on his lips, could resolve to cheat the wealthy and liberal convert for his own gain,—we know with what result! But let us look at the moral of the servants' question, and of Naaman's acceptance of their advice.

1. Our text, then, has often been used, in order to relieve a difficulty, involved in the apparent incongruity between the outward aspect of the great Christian ordinances and the effect ascribed to their due application. The two, it is thought, do not fit ; the antecedent is too small for the consequent ; a few words spoken, a little water poured on the forehead, the touch of an appointed hand,—“elements” of bread and wine blessed and given, and eaten, and drunk,—what, it is asked, can these things do in the area of the spiritual life ? how powerless they must be to affect the inward being ! Of course they are powerless in themselves ; that is exactly the point :

it is, as has been well said, this very "simplicity"¹ of the vehicles of Divine gifts which fits them for their peculiar function; it is their conspicuous lack of all intrinsic efficacy which makes them all the better qualified to serve as His organs, in whose sight all created things are, as such, alike "insignificant," but who, when He willed that His Son should become Incarnate, established as a principle of His Kingdom the operation of an all-powerful love through means which proclaimed their own inherent insufficiency. So it is that Sacramental agency is not only a test and stimulus of faith,² but a standing rebuke to spiritual pride; it emphatically sets forth God as the Bestower of grace, of that grace which flows from the mystery of a supreme condescension; it shows us a "treasure" lodged "in earthen vessels" (to adopt St. Paul's words about himself), just in order "that the excellency of the power may be"—that is, be seen to be—"of God,"—the Sacrament, and indeed the minister, being mere instruments of His soul-renewing energy,—that neither flesh nor spirit should "glory in His presence." Let us adore Him as working by the means which His sovereign will has selected, and

¹ Gladstone, *Church Principles*, etc., p. 179; Newman. *Sermons*, iii. 277.

² Cp. Liddon, *University Sermons*, i. 205.

which depend for their virtue on the Incarnate life of the Word who, for us, became Man; let us use them the more loyally and trustfully, because we can look through them to Christ; let us avoid, as a backward step, all recourse to our own Abanas and Pharpars, when we have a Jordan to wash in, and a Christ there to make us clean.

2. But the words have a yet wider application than that which relates to the ordinances of His Church. The simplicities of the kingdom of grace encounter us, or rather, embrace us, wherever we turn the glance of a soul enlightened by faith and worship. Everywhere and always, God is at work for us, using little things, common things, simple things, as occasions of good to us, if we will but look out for them, and accept them. Ah! my brethren, does not He know—far better than the most refined and cultured spiritual insight could perceive—how subtle, complex, all-pervading, is the array of evil forces against our peace; how they watch *against* our souls, at every corner of daily life, perverting, tainting, spoiling what otherwise might be fair and healthful? Let us praise Him for surrounding us, by way of compensation, with a spiritual atmosphere amid which we can, so to speak, inhale grace at every turn. We have not to go out of our way, and

attempt great things, in order to get good; our Jordan is within easy reach—

“The herbs we seek to heal our woe
Familiar by our pathway grow.”¹

In every walk of life, if we choose, we can walk with God; His hand is always held out to us. The most ordinary occupations can be sanctified by being pursued as in His sight; the sign of the Cross, as it were, can be stamped upon them all. Morning prayers earnestly offered; a few hearty aspirations for help and grace, darted up at intervals of a busy day; an honest review at night of thoughts, words, and deeds; a childlike confession of sin as to a Father, a thoughtful recognition of His goodness, a commendation of one's self, and those whom one loves, to His protection,—is this a “great” or painful thing to do? Think, too, of the benefit to be gained from a few verses of Scripture, or a few words of a good hymn, learned by heart and quietly said over, to be ready at the right moment, when temptation comes in like a flood; think of what may come from the devout use of the Holy Name of Jesus; think also of the rich opportunities to be found in our daily intercourse with others,—how the kindly word spoken, the unselfish deed done, may be just that response to grace whereby

¹ Christian Year: First Sunday after Easter.

grace can be increased, and a good step made in the upward journey. Remember that "the intention makes the work," and that a pure intention of pleasing God can act on the routine of daily business like the salt which the prophet cast into the waters.¹ Believe that "there is scarce an act, a word, a thought through the day, but *may* have its fruit of grace,"—that "grace is spread round us like the manna."² Let us try, dear brethren, to-morrow and the day after, and so on, for one day at a time, how best we may please our Lord, being sure that if we mean it, He will show us the way, and strengthen us to persevere in it. Ah! believe it, He does desire our salvation; and if, in order to that end, we ask Him to cleanse and heal us, He could as soon cease to exist, as refuse to grant the prayer.

¹ 2 Kings ii. 21.

² Pusey, Lenten Sermons, p. 352.

SERMON XXIV.

SAINTLINESS A WITNESS FOR CHRIST.

“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”
—REV. vii. 14.

It was once said by a very thoughtful and deeply religious student of sacred truth, that whoever enters on the study of Church history must be prepared for many surprises.¹ That is to say, what we see to have been actually the course of the Divine Kingdom in this world repeatedly goes counter to our natural expectations, and rudely shocks our idealising dreams; it sends us back, overawed and humbled, or perhaps for the time bewildered, to acknowledge that even in the management of His own sacred cause, God's ways are incomprehensible, His counsels profounder than the great deep. We see error following upon error, controversy multiplying into more

¹ Charles Marriott; quoted in *Masters of English Theology*, p. 109.

controversies, trials caused by unbelief succeeding without a breathing-time to trials caused by persecution. Piety is often misguided until it proves a stumbling-block; institutions devised in single-hearted zeal turn corrupt, and cumber the ground in the Lord's vineyard; the visible unity of Christendom breaks up, and the primitive argument from the concordant love of all who named the Name of the one Redeemer becomes a sort of antiquarian curiosity. And if this is written in large characters on the history of the Church, it is not less legible in the experience of individual Christians. Why, we ask, in disappointment and despondency, why are good impressions so easily effaced? Why do characters deteriorate so terribly? Why do some, after wise and tender training in boyhood, assert their freedom as men by turning their backs upon God? Why, for instance, is a Confirmation a scene fraught with such yearning anxieties? Or, if persons look into themselves, they sometimes wonder why temptation has been so strong, and duty so difficult. They are tempted to fancy that if religion can help others, it has somehow been unhelpful in their case; they almost take upon their lips the fatalistic self-excuse that some dark influence has made prayers for them unreal, and means of grace ineffective; and we seem

to know, too well, what they will do in the end thereof.

Does, then, the law of "vanity" or failure prevail within the domain of religion itself? The question places us on ground where our treadings may well-nigh slip. The facts, we say, are unquestionable; they cannot be ignored; not only in human life as a whole, but in religious life also,

"Ill masters good; good seems to change
To ill with greatest ease:
And, worst of all, the good with good
Is at cross purposes."

The poet¹ proceeds—

"It is not so, but so it looks;
And we lose courage then;
And doubts will come if God has kept
His promises to men."

And the adversaries of religion make their own capital out of this difficulty; and many who wish to cling to Christ are, perhaps oftener than they would venture to confess, harassed by misgivings which they would fain silence, as to whether His Cross has ceased to be the healing of the nations—whether, in fact, He has not "had His day."

Something might be said, by way of suggesting relief, as to the fact, familiar to all who read their

¹ Faber.

Bibles, that all this trouble was foretold. It may be that as the Jews in our Lord's time habitually averted their attention from those aspects of prophecy which did not fit in with their cravings for a secular Christ, so Christians have often dwelt on the predicted triumphs of their religion, until they have forgotten the conditions which, in a world like this, all such predictions must presuppose. But the parables of the Sower and the Tares have to be considered, before we can take comfort from the parables of the Mustard-seed and the Leaven. Our Lord Himself had raised the question as to what should be the state of "faith" at His return. Apostles had given warning that "perilous times should set in," and "scoffers should come," and "seducers wax worse and worse," and Antichrist, or "the lawless one, be revealed." But the Lord would *not* be "asleep in the ship." And, in fact, we see how often the force of evil has been arrested in mid-career; how "the hour has come, and the man," for deliverance; how an influence has been exerted to weaken the attractions of misbelief or unbelief; how evil has been made the "servile minister" of good; how heresy or false philosophy has educated the mind of the Church, quickened her powers of self-defence, and constrained her to take a worthier estimate of that Wisdom, which is concentrated in the

simplest formulas of her creed. Or consider how, in humbler instances, the very sins of a father become warnings to a son. As Ezekiel says, he “considereth, and doeth *not* suchlike.” Or some woeful result of sin, befalling a companion, startles others into that fear which “is a fountain of life.”¹ In ways too various to mention,—thanks to the versatility of Divine grace,—“out of the eater comes forth meat;” the very victory which Satan has gained in one case is the occasion of his overthrow in another.

But we may feel the want of a more direct and positive consolation; and surely that want is supplied in the thought of All Saints. The festival comes just when nature in her sights and sounds, her very scents, is speaking to us of decay; and when the sad tones of her voice evoke, as it were by sympathy, the thought that—

“Now is the autumn of the tree of life;
Its leaves are shed upon the unthankful earth.”²

Or the words of that prophet whose life has been called “a lesson for the disappointed,” come home to us when the “fall” of the year seems to symbolise the drearier side of the religious prospect: “Harvest is passed, summer is ended, and we are not saved.”³

¹ Prov. xiv. 27.

² Newman, *Lyra Apostolica*, p. 171.

³ Jer. viii. 20.

But then, just then, the gloomy atmosphere lights up, the clouds lift, the sun breaks forth in splendour, as we think of those, specifically called Saints, who have represented the Christian idea of life with signal force and fidelity; who, in the inspiring words of the Scottish Communion Office, "have been the choice vessels of God's grace, and the lights of the world in their several generations."

A great writer, to whom the Church owes much,¹ has dwelt on the "awful rejoicing transport" awakened in men of the earlier Christian ages by the discovery of "a new and astonishing possibility, that men, not here and there, but on a large scale, might attain to real, inward, energetic goodness of the soul," that "righteousness and love and purity" might after all "have a visible seat in the world, and wield" an effective "power." He traces "this great surprise, this great change," to "the visitation and presence of Divine and unearthly Goodness, in real human form, making Himself like men, calling men to be like Him." In a subsequent series of lectures he shows how that supreme "unveiling of the love of God," producing, as it did, a consciousness of mysterious union with Christ, acted on various races, bringing out in each some

¹ Dean Church, *The Gifts of Civilisation, etc.*, pp. 183, 281; comp. his *Discipline of the Christian Character*, p. 107.

virtue that it specially needed, supplying a fresh moral force, kindling a new and high enthusiasm, schooling levity into seriousness, opening channels for pure affection, applying to rough energy the discipline of consecrated law. In such a work as this, the Saints of Christendom, whatever may have been their mistakes and their shortcomings, were manifestly foremost. Thinking or reading of them, we see what the Faith could do for human character; how, under its strong, sweet influence, these men and women of our own flesh and blood, in all classes of society, were verily "made strong out of weakness, wrought righteousness, waxed valiant in the good fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens." By faith, as the Epistle to the Hebrews says of the Old Testament worthies, but by a faith which rested on the Christ of the Gospels, which believed though it saw not, which overcame the world because it had love burning at its heart,—by this faith, age after age, was formed that persuasive evidence for Christianity which is contained in the fact of Christian holiness. One cannot "cut down the tree and keep the fruit." The Christian horror of sin, and the Christian striving after "sanctification," will be impossible for him who has ceased to believe in the "truth"

of Christianity as God's "word" spoken through Christ.¹

Persons may disparage the Christian type of goodness on the very ground that it is theological in its origin; but if they admire it, they must give up the notion of detaching it from the Creed. St. Paul, we remember, derives from revealed "promises" a motive for purity of conduct, and urges self-forgetfulness by a reference to the supreme condescension.² And the answer to the question of St. John is full of significance: "These that are arrayed in white robes are they that came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Belief in the efficacy of the world-redeeming sacrifice, and loyalty to the Redeemer for the sake of His great love,—these have been proved, from the days of the Protomartyr downwards, to be the conditions of genuine sanctification. And here is the practical result of Hallowtide thought—to lift us up out of our baseness and our selfishness, by the power of a hope that we too may yet do better, by the dominant attraction of Love and Purity incarnate, by faith in a Christ all-potent to cleanse and to restore.

¹ John xvii. 17.

² 2 Cor. vii. 1; Phil. ii. 4, ff.

SERMON XXV.

THE TWOFOLD RESULT OF DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS.

“Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”—ST. LUKE ii. 34, 35.

WHEN the Blessed Virgin Mary received the announcement which we yearly commemorate in a specially welcome festival, her answer compressed into a brief sentence the whole idea of faith, as of absolute trust involving a loyal self-surrender. “Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy word.” Elisabeth could truly say of her that she was “blessed” in that “she believed;” she was already securing to herself a beatitude more desirable than any mere dignity,—even the dignity of that august and peerless Motherhood,—for she was taking high place among those true-hearted ones who “hear the word of God, and keep it.”¹ The phrase is signifi-

¹ Luke xi. 28. *Μενοῦνγε* implies, “Yes, but look at it rather in this point of view.” Cp. Phil. iii. 8.

cant when we apply it to her. The piety which she exhibits is not emotional; there is no transport, no rapture, in her Song, but rather a singular gravity and calmness, a sobriety which amounts to reserve. She meditates, takes account of facts, contrasts one type of character with another. She does not waste feeling in expression; her tone is quietly serious; excitable temperaments might even deem it cold. When she hears the story of the shepherds, she "keeps it all, and ponders" it;¹ she pieces it on to her own unique experience, taking this point and then that, combining them deliberately into a whole, assimilating their entire significance, and thus enriching and consolidating her faith, and forming by degrees "a sacred treasure, which she guarded in her heart, and afterwards transmitted to the Church."² It is the process appropriate to a strong and self-collected mind; and she is thus unconsciously schooling herself for the first shock which she has to encounter.

It comes, as shocks often do come, quite unexpectedly. She has gone with her husband to present her Son, as a firstborn, in the temple, according to "the law of the Lord;" and there the old man, "just and devout,"—in whose person the tenacious hope, which for ages had sustained all faithful Israelites,

¹ Luke ii. 19.

² Pressensé, *Jésus-Christ*, p. 275.

might seem to be concentrated and summarised,—receives them with solemn thanks to that good “Master,” who has allowed him to live till his eyes have seen the embodied salvation and glory of his race. But, having thus poured out his soul before God, he turns to the husband and wife, pronounces a benediction over them, and then addresses himself to Mary, the only real parent, and shows her the sterner side of the glorious truth in which she has so unique an interest. Let her attend to this point: she thinks, no doubt, that nothing but good can come from the birth of her “holy Offspring,” who is to be called Son of God, and of whose Kingdom there shall be no end. Surely He will be the joy and strength and light of all who have longed for the consolation of Israel—that, and that only. Ah yes, He will be that, but *not* that only;—so the aged saint, who in these last hours of life becomes a prophet, assures her in words which must have been saddening, and may have been well-nigh overpowering. Let her remember how Isaiah had predicted that the Lord of hosts Himself should be a “sanctuary” for some, but a “rock of offence” for others;”¹ and if her Son was to be, as in truth He was to be, “a precious corner-stone of sure foundation,”² still this would not

¹ Isa. viii. 14.² Isa. xxviii. 16.

be the invariable result. Some would stumble at Him, would find difficulties in His teaching, would say that He was not what they had expected, would misconceive His mind, would on this or that pretext refuse to follow Him. And, more than this, there would be those who, like the traitor Apostle, would be really the worse for having come into contact with Him; better for them had they never heard of Him, and therefore never incurred a responsibility for which they were morally altogether unfit. He was to be a sign from God; yes, but a sign not universally accepted, a sign which some would contradict, persuading themselves that it was a mere illusion. And then comes in the abrupt, appalling parenthesis, "And, what is more, I have a word for thee personally,—a sword shall pierce through thine own soul;"—words which are usually interpreted in reference to that hour of desolation when

"At the Cross, her station keeping,
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,"

but which, if we consider the context, seem to point to some interior trial of faith, however brief, like a stab; and perhaps the commentator was not too bold who asked whether it could be supposed that Mary was perfected without any trials of this sort.¹ At

¹ Bengel.

any rate, such a view is in agreement with what follows; for Symeon, resuming the general statement, affirms that this twofold result of the coming of Christ into the world is to have the effect of bringing forth into light, from the recesses of many hearts, the modes of thought which habitually dwell there, and by which conduct is determined,—even as in the Epistle to the Hebrews we read of God's word as “sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing of soul and spirit, and well able to judge the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

What, then, is that law, belonging to God's inward moral government, of which Symeon here foretells a signal operation?

It is this, that His presence, in whatever way it comes near to men, acts, so far, as a test of human character. It does so inevitably; it must “reveal thoughts out of hearts;” it must pull off disguises, however thickly laid on, and set the realities of character in the searching light of God's countenance: even as St. Paul tells us that evil, when exposed, or “manifested” in its true nature, is immersed in that very light which has told upon it, so that it may in a sense be called ‘light.’¹ For good or for evil, the visitation of Divine truth and love and holiness calls

¹ Eph. v. 13, R. V.

into action the dominant principle within us; and that action is the more pronounced, the more intense, because of the call. We must, perforce, reply to the appeal thus made; if we do not answer Yes, we are in effect answering No. If we are morally indisposed to meet God, to come to terms with Him,—in the expressive Scripture phrase, to walk with Him,—we go further back just because He is coming near; we hide ourselves from Him, as from some one who would trouble and interfere with us, when we want to be let alone and to take our own way; or we actually revolt, as if resentful of His claim when thus made, and commit ourselves to some definite step of irreligious self-assertion. So it is that a Divine manifestation results in a taking of sides, in a rehearsal, so to speak, of the awful scene of Doomsday. As we read in the Gospel which dwells so solemnly on these contrasts and separations produced by the presence of the Word Incarnate, “This is the judgment, that the light is come into the world,—and every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light,—but he that doeth the truth cometh to the light;” and again in our Lord’s own words, “For judgment I am come into this world.”¹ The substance of such texts is put into a terse, pro-

¹ John iii. 19–21; ix. 39.

verbial form by one whose pre-eminence as an Oxford preacher was due in great measure to his insight into the intricacies of man's spiritual history, and the far-reaching consequences of some habitual moral drift: "Wherever He visits, He divides."¹

Of course, when we say this, we must thankfully remember that this judgment or severance is the result of man's free-will as recognised in the providence of God. According to what has been called His "principal" or antecedent will,² our heavenly Father "willeth all men to be saved." He is continually reiterating the question, "Why will ye die? have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" and the affirmation, "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live."³ This assurance, given to the Jews, has been abundantly renewed to us Christians, the professed followers and servants of Him who has declared that no one coming to Him shall be cast out. Let us grasp it firmly, and take it in; it is literally and unreservedly true that salvation, and therewith all the grace needful for salvation, are offered to all who accept Christ; that

¹ Newman, *Discussions and Arguments*, p. 114.

² Hooker, ed. Keble, ii. 573.

³ Ezek. xviii. 31, 23; xxxiii. 11.

no sin which can be repented of is beyond the reach of God's forgiving mercy ; that if we are not saved, it will be, in the fullest force of the words, our own fault. And therefore it is evident that our Lord and Saviour desires to be a Corner-stone to all, and not a stumbling-stone to any ; that it is our doing, and not His, if the manifestation of Divine truth and goodness in His Person becomes for us a repellent and not an attractive force ; if the pillar of fire is for us a cloud and darkness, if the savour of life is turned into a savour of death, if what was intended to be, and might have been, for our wealth, is perverted into an occasion of deeper falls.

To bring this briefly home. If we are fostering any besetting sin, it is certain to destroy the possibility of sympathy with God's will for us ; and when that is gone, when a secret aversion from His will supersedes it, any amount of services or sermons, or of easy and frequent access to means of grace, will be worse than useless, will be virtually "set for our fall," will be signs which we shall not recognise, which we shall practically disown and contradict.

Our wisdom and safety, therefore, lie in asking that the light may be shed on all dark corners of our souls ; that we may be taught to know the plague of our own hearts ; that through His help, whose office

it is to convict of sin, we may not go on deceiving our own selves, but be enabled to discern the lurking evil, and strengthened to pluck it forth and cast it away. This will be, in truth, to take a step forward; it will be an act of responsiveness to grace. We shall be no longer "hardening our hearts" against the "Voice" which, in calling us to repentance and obedience, is but calling us to peace and to salvation. Yes, and let us for a moment look far onward, and think what it would be, after all the trials of this life, to pass into "that world" where the Presence of the All-holy can never be aught but beatific, and to receive the welcome from our Divine Redeemer's lips, "To you I have been a Corner-stone."

SERMON XXVI.

CHRIST AND SOCIAL DUTY.

“If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto Him, Which?”—ST. MATT. xix. 17, 18.

OF those who in our day have cast off, not only the Christian faith as such, but all distinct belief in a living God, the Ruler of the world and the Judge of human souls, it would appear that some are not without anxiety about the question, What will be the effect on morals, if men in general set religion aside? What practical sanction will remain for the law of right conduct? or, in plainer words, will the average man, with his ordinary propensities, and in the midst of what the old Bible language calls temptations, be able to keep straight when he has been taught not to look upward? Others are of opinion that, although a certain beautiful type of goodness must vanish with the faith on which it depends, yet morality of a fairly good working kind will last very well without faith,—well enough, on the whole,

for what life requires, when poetic ideals are surrendered, and realities are accepted in their place. If nothing can be known, to any purpose, about the matters with which religion has concerned itself, yet men can get through life with reasonable satisfaction by occupying their minds and exerting their energies in social virtue and philanthropic activity,—especially if they work on system, and in concert. If they have not a God to serve, there is always man, and to serve him is task enough. And those who take this view are likely to encourage themselves and others by affirming that religion, in fact, has been too theological to be soundly ethical; that its fears and its hopes, its dogmas, its precepts, and its ordinances have cramped, instead of supporting, morality.

This is freely said; and it is therefore desirable to remember that whatever criticism unbelief may direct against the religious standard of conduct,—in whatever degree it may pretend to have improved upon religious motives for well-doing, or amended the religious conception of vice or of virtue,—one thing is quite clear and certain, that very great stress is laid, in Scripture, from the strictly religious point of view, on the duties commonly called social. They are repeatedly referred to as tests of character. What impresses one at first sight is, that where we might

have expected to find the more directly religious duties insisted on, they seem to be put, for the time, into the background, and what comes to the front, in the first instance, is the obligation which binds us to our fellow-men. Take, for instance, the fifteenth Psalm; it professes to answer the question, Who are qualified for the Divine favour? who shall rest upon God's holy hill? and answers by mentioning several points of duty, of which only one belongs to what is usually understood by piety, and it simply consists in respect for those who fear the Lord. Or look at some passages in the prophets, which adopt social virtue, in one form or another, as the criterion of religious acceptableness. The blessing of security in days of peril is for "him that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly, that despiseth the gain of oppressions, and stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood." Or the evidence that a king has "known the Lord" is found in the fact that he "judged the cause of the poor." Or, after a stern rebuke of a heartless show of devotion, there comes a call for "judgment and righteousness." Or the Divine commands are summarised in such precepts as, "Speak the truth, execute true judgment, let none of you imagine evil against his neighbour; and love no false oath."¹ The

¹ Isa. xxxiii. 15; Jer. xxii. 16; Amos v. 24; Zech. viii. 16.

same way of speaking is found in the New Testament. The great Christian virtue which St. Paul sets above faith and hope is depicted as looking manward rather than Godward, and is elsewhere described by him as "the fulfilling of the law." St. James in like manner reduces the whole law to the love of our neighbour, and defines "pure religion" in terms which do not expressly include worship. And,—not to speak of the description of the judgment of "all nations" (that is, apparently, of the heathen world), in which the distinction between the "sheep and the goats" lies in the fulfilment or neglect of social charities,—our Lord, in the text, replies to the rich young ruler's question as to the commandments which are to be kept, in order to obtain life eternal, by reciting the precepts of the second table, not of the first; and what He afterwards recommends as a form of "perfection" is almsgiving on a very exceptional scale. No doubt, in other passages, both sides of human duty are emphasised. So Micah asks, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, *and* to walk humbly with thy God?" And our Lord, when questioned by the Pharisees, repeats first the "great commandment" about love to God, and then the second, about love to our neighbour.¹ And it would be really too absurd

¹ Micah vi. 8; Matt. xxii. 37-40.

to take the former class of texts as, in any sense, disparaging the direct service of God. What, then, is their import? How do they differ from the modern "secularist" insistence on the duties of man to man? In this, assuredly—that they presuppose a religious motive. They speak to persons who are thoroughly possessed with the conviction, "We are always and everywhere before the throne of God; always and everywhere under a law of obedience to Him." And, from this point of view, they endeavour, if we may so speak, to lead us, by means of the familiar, to the transcendent; they take the facts of social duty and affection as well adapted for training us to estimate aright our debt of love and allegiance to the Most High. But they also admonish us, in His Name, to pay attention to these facts. They guard us against a narrow conception of religious duty, which, by its very narrowness, is pretty sure to stiffen into formalism. They protest against an unreality which would cause the salt of religion to lose its savour,—the unreality of imagining that assiduity in acts of devotion, or the mere luxuriance of pious feeling, or expenditure of time and money for sacred purposes, or a fervid zeal for ecclesiastical interests when no selfish object can be in question, will make up for want of ingenuousness, want of considerateness, want of help-

fulness, or want of charity. It is quite possible for a man to think himself loyal to a "cause," while he is cherishing antipathy to its opponents, with whom, as it happens, he has come into collision ; quite possible to take refuge from a sense, for instance, of faults of temper in the consciousness of capacity to enjoy a "heartly service ;" quite possible to underrate veracity and candour, fairness and justice, as "merely natural" virtues, and to ignore the fact that they are adopted by Christianity, are spiritualised by the power of a supernatural motive, and make demands on the serious moral effort of Christians as such. Again, these urgent iterations of social duty bear witness for God as the Master of the whole of our life, as presiding over our discharge of the most ordinary social obligations. They remind us that all the facts of our humanity are of His ordering and under His cognisance ; that His claim extends over our secular transactions, instead of confining itself within the precinct which is specifically termed sacred ; that the servant of God is under his Lord's eye in his place of business, in his professional routine, in travelling, in conversation, yes, in the very pleasures which he shares with everyday associates, as truly as when on his knees before the altar. There is, indeed, a real distinction between what is external and what is

internal to the innermost circle of spiritual life; and the attempt to make everything equally holy is sure to end in making everything equally common. But, nevertheless, no corner of our life, no fragment of its mass of occupations, is alien to the visitations of Divine grace, or free from the bond of Christian responsibility. If we fancy that in any employment whatever we can speak or act as if we had not known Christ, "that which cometh into our minds shall not be at all." And therefore the relations which link us to each other, and which shape and determine so much of our life, involve relations which link us to Him.

And, moreover, they derive a new and constraining force from that supreme fact of the Incarnation which gives a dignity to the homeliest "things of the world," and makes the idea of humanity at once more lovely and more imperative, by placing it full in the sunlight of a condescension for which there are no adequate words. We then remember how the great Apostle, who had seen life at so many points, whose sympathies were so versatile, who attached such value to honest and dutiful work, enforces his warning against self-assertion and party spirit by words which suggest so much more than they say, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,"—*also* in Him who, being in the

form of God, stooped to assume the form of a servant, —and yet further humbled Himself even unto the death of the Cross! If it seems to us a startling transition, for St. Paul it was quite natural and a matter of course to impress on those who, as yet, were not of the same mind, the lesson conveyed by His unique self-abnegation.

In a word, this mind of Jesus Christ, and His will for us, are in relation to what He calls the second of the two great commandments, as well as to the first. If we wish to please Him better, let us resolve, by the aid of His grace, to be more observant of the rights, the wants, the feelings of others; more kindly, more sympathetic, more equitable, more brotherlike,—in the fullest sense more unselfish;—in His Name, and for His sake, who, as a youth, being all the while personally Divine, worked as an underling in a carpenter's shop; who in His earthly ministry went about doing good unto all men, and attracting souls, in large measure, by His helpful pity for bodily distresses; and who, in exalting our nature to His throne, left behind Him, as a test of true discipleship, the new commandment that we should love one another,—and that not “in word nor in tongue,” not with fitful emotion looking out for its own pleasure, but with affection vitalised into a principle of action, “in deed and in truth.”

SERMON XXVII.

CHRIST'S PRESENCE AMID THEOLOGICAL STUDIES.

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”—ST. JOHN i. 14.

IT is a happy circumstance for all connected with this College,¹ that its annual festival recurs at the end of the long series of solemnities which have brought before us divers aspects of our adorable Saviour's Person and work; and that it follows so closely on that great Sunday on which the thoughts that have occupied us on the anniversaries from Advent to Whitsuntide are united in our solemn confession of the “most ancient of all mysteries,” the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. A happy circumstance, because it associates all the enjoyments of a festal gathering with that steadfast, loving, adoring faith in the

¹ Cuddesdon.

Divine realities of the Gospel on which, as on a rock, a College like this must stand, if it is to do any work for Christ, if it is to be true to the idea of its foundation. And we can hardly better respond to the call which this anniversary seems to make upon us, than by placing ourselves in thought at the central point of Christianity, "refreshing our souls" in the truest sense of the word, rekindling, if so it may be, and reviving in our hearts the "fire of love" for the Lord Incarnate, by dwelling on that wondrous verse, which concentrates into so small a compass whatever is most awful and most precious in the history of Divine condescensions, and connects so pointedly the first coming of the Emmanuel with His servants' vision of His Divine and human perfectness. In this verse, to adopt the ancient Church phraseology, the *θεολογία* and the *οἰκονομία* are united. To repeat it believingly may well have that effect upon us which a thoughtful writer, somewhat *ab extra* to the position of Catholic Christians, has ascribed to the Creeds as recited by those who heartily accept them; as an act of "intellectual adoration," it may alike enkindle and "fortify the soul." So let us, my brethren, on this day, contemplate this inexhaustible saying.

We shall see its force the better by considering its position, as preceded, first, by a series of assertions

as to the Word in His un-incarnate life, and then by a description of His relations to His Precursor, and to the various classes to whom at His coming He appealed. We have Him set forth to us as existing "in the beginning," before all worlds, that is, as far back as thought can reach ; as co-existing with God ; as Himself God ; as creating, life-giving, illuminating ; as bearing to be resisted by whatever was alien to God's goodness and God's purity. "Then," the Apostle seems to say, "let me help you to combine these thoughts with the office of His appointed witness and herald, who spoke of Him as coming, and then saw Him as actually come ; present within this sphere of human life, which He had called into being ; but neglected, unwelcomed, and unloved. Mystery of human perverseness ! For, remember, this scene was enacted in the Holy Land itself, among the covenant people. They, His own, received Him not : that is, they did not as a people : but some of them did open their hearts to the sweet influences of His love and holiness, and richly indeed were they rewarded with the peerless privilege of becoming His Father's children." And then, as if in answer to the question, "But what was, in fact, His coming ?" the Apostle proceeds, "And the Word became flesh." Observe the force of this emphatic

assertion. He did not simply visit the world, and converse with men, as in the days of the patriarchs. He did not assume a mere semblance of manhood, or adopt only a portion of that which forms its essence. He did not part with aught of His own original essence, as if His Godhead could be in any wise "converted into flesh." He did not ally Himself with a saintly human person, so as to use him as His own selected organ, and enrich him with a special fulness of His Spirit. No; all these statements of the case would be inconsistent with the plain, positive, definite language of St. John. What he says is, in effect, that the eternal, co-existent, Divine Word really condescended to become Man: "flesh" being used here as it is in the words, "All flesh shall see the salvation of God," "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh." In the words of a great Eastern Father, whose life-work as a Church teacher was the upholding of this truth, "He became man, without losing His existence as God; but being still what He was, and abiding in the glory of the Godhead, and not being changed or altered into what He was not, nor again by any fusion of His nature with the flesh, He was inconceivably and ineffably joined by union to flesh that had a reasonable soul."¹ Or, in the words

¹ Cyril Alex., Expl. Cap. 1; a sample of many passages.

of a great living writer,¹ He "took into His own infinite essence man's nature itself, in all its completeness, creating a soul and body, and at the moment of creation making them His own, so that they never existed by themselves, or except as in Him;" and thus His acts in this lower sphere of His existence,—as in its heavenly sphere which He had occupied from eternity,—were the acts of the self-same Divine "Ego," the Eternal Word, the Son of God, who had vouchsafed to become man. Thus, if Scripture ascribes Divine acts or properties to "man," or human to "God,"—if it speaks of the Son of Man as "in heaven," while He was yet visibly on earth, or of the Word of life being "handled," or the Lord of glory "crucified,"²—it is because all His acts, Divine and human, belong to the one single Person who is both God and Man.³ It is this mysterious adoption of human relations into His inmost personality, so essential to His work as a true Mediator and Atoner, which Catholic theology has striven to express by the phrase "Hypostatic Union," and by the well-known adverbs⁴ which exclude, respectively, a con-

¹ Newman, Sermons, iii. 164; cf. ib. vi. 61, ff. Cp. Liddon, Bampton Lectures, p. 262.

² John iii. 13; 1 John i. 1; 1 Cor. ii. 8. See, too, Acts xx. 28; 1 Cor. xv. 47.

³ Cyril, Expl. Cap. 4; so Theodoret, Dial. ii. p. 108

⁴ Ἀσυγχύτως (a term used by Cyril adv. Th. 1) and ἀδιαίρετως.

fusion of the manhood with the Godhead, and a conception of separate personalities for the Son of God and the Virgin-born. It is this which our familiar Christmas hymn, "Hark! the herald angels,"¹ proclaims in language as vivid and accurate as that of the Ephesian Council; which faith has loved to set forth in those majestic, rapturous antitheses,² "the Everlasting One is born, the Impalpable is enclosed in human hands; He that is on the wings of the wind is He that lies on the Virgin's bosom; while He sits at meat with publicans, He is adored by the Angel host." These sayings, in truth, were not flights of pious fancy; they were simply aspects of that which is affirmed in the proposition, "The Word became flesh."

But further, "He dwelt among us;" He made His *σκηνή*, His tabernacle, among us, in that visible earthly organism which was as truly His as His human attributes of thought or feeling. And this reminds St. John of that ancient "tabernacle of witness," where the Divine Shechinah, the visible splendour of God, was enshrined in the Holy of Holies. "Ah

¹ So the "Adeste Fideles."

² See Proclus, Hom. c. 9. Comp. St. Hilary, de Trin. ii. 25; St. Augustine, Sermons, 184, etc.; Hammond's Liturgies Eastern and Western, p. 17. "Paradoxes, than which nothing is dearer to faith," says Dörner.

yes!" he seems to say, in a parenthesis full of thoughtful exultation; "and we did really gaze upon that true Shechinah which beamed forth from the shrine of His spotless flesh; and worthy indeed it was to be the glory of the Only-begotten from the Father, consisting as it did in the perfection of grace and truth." For, assuredly, although the final words of the verse belong by construction to the clause, "He abode among us," and are, thus far, parted from the parenthesis which follows it, they yet exhibit the character of that sacred "glory" to which the parenthesis refers. "We beheld His glory," the Apostle means, "in that we found Him so full of grace and truth." "His glory," says St. Hilary,¹ "was beheld, in that, as belonging to the Only one from the Father, it is perfect with grace and truth." His human soul was the fitting, the only adequate receptacle of those powers and gifts of Divine love, which energise in the fruits of sanctity. Powers are they, and gifts, not simple favour or good will: for we are dealing with One whose will is power, whose favour is the energy of love. This is the grace of God,—a rich effusion of spiritual forces, which dwelt in completeness, and acted without let or hindrance, in the soul of Jesus Christ, from whence they were, as the Apostle

¹ De Trin. i. 10.

afterwards tells us, diffused in portions to those who adhered to Him. And in Him, also, resided all truth;—all fulness of Divine reality, as distinct from all foreshadowing symbols; and all fulness, too, of Divine faithfulness, whereby the promises of God were conspicuously fulfilled, having, as St. Paul says, “in Him their yea and amen, unto the glory of God by us;”¹ and all fulness, lastly, of Divine revelation, centring itself, as it did, on His Person, who is the Sovereign Teacher, and in whose teaching alone is contained the truth which makes men free.

“We beheld His glory.” The Evangelist, indeed, seems conscious of having, through his intercourse with the Lord Incarnate, realised those hopes of, and cravings for, a Theophany, which had for ages been the salt of life to holy and lofty souls. “I beseech Thee,” the great Hebrew lawgiver had prayed,—“I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.”² And now at last, by the appearance of the Son of God among men, the fullest answer had been given to that entreaty which it could ever receive in this world. In that first Epistle, which Ebrard considers to be a kind of postscript to the Gospel, St. John insists, at the outset, on the fact of his having seen and heard all that could be seen and heard of that eternal Word of

¹ 2 Cor. i. 20.

² Exod. xxxiii. 18.

life, "which was with the Father and was manifested unto us;" and then he adds, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us." As if to say, The gift of a present living Christ, an object for the gaze of living faith, is for all generations of Christ's people; all and each, till the day of His return, must "live by the faith of the Son of God," and feed their souls on the vision of His spiritual beauty. Yes! if Christianity is to be anything for any man, if it is to be a fact governing his life, it must be, for him, a personal faith in Christ's own Person. Ours is "the truth as it is in Jesus;" the early Christians, "whose faith" we are to "follow, considering the end of their conversation," overcame the world, not by believing simply in the Christian religion, but by believing, with a passionate, soul-absorbing loyalty, in the Lord Jesus Christ. This was set forth when, of old, the candidate for baptism, called to profess his belief, said, with face turned eastward, and hands stretched forth as in homage, "I attach myself to Thee, O Christ!"¹ And this is the vital truth which underlies the formula, very current in the language of our time,—that what we believe in is "not a creed or a system of doctrine, but a Person." Doubtless, that formula may be

¹ See St. Chrys. in Col. Hom. 6. c. 4.

accepted by some in a sense disparaging to the value of creeds or doctrines: and such persons will need to be reminded that the "form of sound words,"¹ or rather, the "pattern of healthful teaching," is a most efficacious instrument for the correct apprehension of the great Object of faith: that as a provision for a vivid and effective conception of that object, it is a powerful incentive to religious affection and obedience: that if we cast away the use of it, we forfeit very much of clearness in our view of God, as revealed in Christ, and therefore, inevitably, of heartiness in our love for Him. Let us, by all means, remember this: but let us also remember, that this great instrument is an instrument, after all; that it must carry us onward to a firmer hold of Him for whom it witnesses, to a fuller acceptance of His infinite claim on our devotion. We are virtually exhorted by the Apostle, according to the real force of his words,² to "confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh;" not simply to confess that He is come, but to confess *Him*. Creeds were indeed well called, by a most earnest servant and worshipper of Christ,³ hymns of thanksgiving. They are so. They are truly akin to the Gloria in Excelsis or Te Deum, in that they are, in one aspect at least, outbursts of adoring love

¹ 2 Tim. i. 13.² 1 John iv. 2.³ Dr. Arnold.

and joy, offered to Him whom they confess as revealed to our faith, as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the One God in Three Persons, "not one only Person, but Three Persons in one substance;" and we do well when, for instance, on the third of our chief Sundays, we first confess the Holy Trinity as one God and one Lord, and ascribe the same glory to Father, Son, and Spirit, and then, with an emphatic "Therefore," take up the song of *Ter Sanctus*. And all our utterances in the way of teaching, and all our thoughts in the way of learning, God's holy truth, must be in Him, and to Him; God Himself, the living God, must be the first and last in all our theology, as He is the Alpha and Omega of our faith and hope and love.

This surely, brethren, is the point at which we must aim. But is it not the case, that those who are specially occupied in the study of sacred truths will often encounter some difficulty in attaining it? Is there not a form of temptation, of hindrance, which will beset at least some persons thus occupied, who may be wholly, or almost wholly, free from temptations to heresy or unbelief? who may, in fact, be keenly alive to the richness, fulness, strength, sweetness, majesty, and harmony of Christianity, as taught and believed within the Church? A person may be

so absorbed in the intellectual consideration of these truths as to seek them, if one may so say, for themselves, and to forget that, if they are anything at all they are witnesses for a living Presence, which is at once most benignant and most exacting, and in which, all day long, he must consciously and obediently live. And, forgetting this, he may go on thinking, reading, working, until the work itself covers the whole field of his thought; and while he is thus engaged upon the scheme or the history of the salvation of his race, he may forget his own personal relations to the Saviour. Yes, it is possible for a soul thus fatally to stop short of Christ Himself, while, perhaps, it fears no evil, because it feels itself to be walking on holy ground. Or if any sudden misgiving should arise, the soul will begin by silencing it, on the ground that the sacredness of its task is a safeguard against any serious danger; and then will go on to persuade itself that the performance of this task will somehow form a virtual substitute for the living warmth of religious energy. The man will find himself colder at heart than he was; reluctant to put aside his books when the hour calls him to God's worship; apt to thrust his own secret religious exercises into little corners of a hard-working day; and, most of all, increasingly apathetic in regard to the highest

and holiest form of intercourse with the crucified and life-giving Redeemer. And he may be conscious that all is not well with him, so far as this is the case; that it is not with him as in days past, "when the candle of God shined upon his head, and by His light he walked through darkness." Yet any uneasiness, caused by this consciousness, will too often and easily be allayed by the thought (which, very likely, he cannot even then put into words) that he is really interested in things sacred, and that on the side of Christian orthodoxy, and therefore on the side of Christ; he will put his own sense on the proverb, so often abused in our time, "*Laborare est orare*;" and will hope that a theological student may stand excused in the sight of God, if he cannot give himself earnestly or frequently to prayer. O most false security! O most disastrous history of a soul, which like that "angel" of the Ephesian Church, rebuked and warned by the heart-searching Lord Himself, is strictly orthodox while secretly cold-hearted, and zealous against false apostles while it has put away its own first love!¹ Truly has it been said that the reading of "good books," as of books written in exposition or defence of religious truth, may be so carried on as to foster self-ignorance; that

¹ Rev. ii. 4.

even knowledge of evidences, or of scriptural arguments, or of the origin and growth of heresies, or of efforts powerful to resist them, requires the love of God in order to its own right guidance ; and that the clear perception of Divine truths, if coupled with a loveless temper, will result in practical atheism.

It is not, surely, enough to say that a person who allows himself to fall into this state gives occasion to the enemies of Christian dogma to cry out against it as fraught with a deadly power to stiffen the soul's true life. Nor, again, do we fathom the whole extent of the evil when we say that as the greatness, theologically speaking, of Athanasius and Augustine depended intimately on their personal devotion in heart and spirit to Christ ; so a man's own insight into Christian truth becomes poorer, fainter, feebler, in so far as he holds aloof from such personal fellowship with Him, who, while on earth, distinctly said that His teaching would not commend itself except where hearts were prepared for its reception. Of course this is so ; when the will and affections are not really given to Christ, there will be a failure of power to enter into the meaning of Christianity, with its spiritual wonder-works of grace, its gift of a mysterious life, its foundation of a Divine kingdom. But this is not all. The end of it is that the man

himself becomes a fresh illustration of St. Paul's tremendous saying about "a savour of death unto death."¹ In him is realised what a great foreign bishop and preacher² so piercingly set forth when speaking to clergy, or to candidates for Holy Orders, that a contact with holiest things, on the part of those who do not strive to become holy, actually hardens them against the grace of God. "That which should have been for their wealth," as, in this instance, Christian truth as apprehended by the intellect, "becomes to them an occasion of falling." The man whom we are thinking of is all the worse for having learned so much about facts of the spiritual world, which his own spiritual carelessness will not allow to act as they should act—as often, by the grace of God, they do act—on his affections and his will. Others are enkindled, others are uplifted, others are

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 16.

² Massillon urges that if a priest does not respond to the spirit of his vocation, the "usage familier et infructueux des choses les plus saintes" produces a "sécheresse" and an "insensibilité," which gradually stiffen into a hopeless "endurcissement." *Œuvres*, ii. 372. So, *ib.* 402, he says that this "insensibilité" is "la malédiction la plus générale et la plus terrible attachée aux saintes fonctions du ministère;" that "avec des mœurs au-dehors irréprochables," a priest may find in the very celebration of the Eucharist only an "augmentation de léthargie." He applies this observation to other priestly duties, including the preparation of sermons,—"*il semble que les livres saints que nous parcourons ne sont pas faits pour nous,*"—and the hearing of confessions, etc.

won to a closer walk with God, to a heartier love of Christ, by the unfolding, perhaps, of the force of some Apostle's argument, or of "the faith once for all delivered" as to the Person or the offices of the Redeemer. He can go into all these things, and carry a dead heart through all; he does not find Christ Himself in them, because he does not look for Him; he is but the more confirmed in the dull hardness of his spiritual insensibility.

And what should be, then, the course taken by any one who, placed amid these difficulties, exposed to these temptations, is honestly desirous of overcoming them, and of finding amid his earnest studies a true Epiphany of the Incarnate Lord?

1. First, he will do what he can to keep alive in himself a real sense of his own position as a sinner. He will think of his sins of time past, and of the sins which, in time present, do most easily beset him. He will force himself to look them in the face, and then, looking up to Him who bore them on the Cross, will say, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this and that evil in Thy sight." Thus will he gain a keener perception of the awful realities of the soul's life; he will feel his own utter need of a purifying Comforter, an atoning Saviour, a pardoning Father. Formalism, of the kind which he has so

much cause to be afraid of, can hardly fail to lose its power, in proportion as he learns more, by personal self-searching, of what sin is, and what repentance should be, of the work that must go on in his own soul, if he would prepare for death and judgment.

2. Again, he will, if he is in earnest, "redeem,"¹ that is, carefully secure all occasions for exercising his soul in the great work of real and hearty worship. He will take pains to offer his own prayers with a concentrated energy of thought and will, as one who believes in the force and greatness of the act. He will not, save in exceptional instances, allow his work to keep him from God's public service on the week-day. He will act upon the recorded experience of thousands of earnest souls, that a single Communion faithfully received often lets in fuller light upon the spiritual consciousness than long hours, spent over books, can give. And surely he will find himself a gainer, if he inserts into his hours of work short prayers for help, and light, and grace, to that Lord whose "countenance," as he knows, can make him "whole;" if, for instance, he lifts up his heart at those three points in each day's course which have long been hallowed by the recollection of the Passion, in such words as—"O Saviour of the world, who by

¹ Eph. v. 15.

Thy Cross and precious Blood hast redeemed us, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord ;” “ We worship Thee, O Christ, and bless Thee, because by Thy Passion Thou hast redeemed the world ;” “ As Thy arms, O my God, were spread out upon the Cross, so vouchsafe to receive us into the arms of Thy mercy, to extend Thy pity, and forgive our sins ;”—or if, also, as the evening closes in, he gives thanks to Him who in the fulness of time, out of His infinite love and Divine pity, “ became flesh and dwelt among us,” to be “ our Jesus and our All.”

3. Once more, the student of Christ's truth, who thus craves to know Christ, will offer up his work, day after day, consciously and purposely, not, in the abstract, to the cause of religion, but definitely, and in very deed, to Jesus Christ. “ My Lord and my God,” he will say, “ I confess Thee, I adore Thee : I lay at Thy feet all that I am doing, and all that I can do, simply and utterly for Thine acceptance. Look down on this work which Thou hast set before me, and give me strength to go about it in Thee and for Thee ; mercifully look upon my infirmities, and make Thine own strength perfect in them ; send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me, and bring me, through my work, to Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling.”

And, be sure of it, he who offers up his work to Jesus will offer up his whole self also. He will open wide his heart and soul to their Redeemer and their Owner; he will be watchful against all tendencies in himself which might interfere with Christ's absolute reign over his being; he will seek for that "perfect heart" which casts out all hypocrisy, and for that "single eye" which makes the whole man "full of light." And what will follow from this earnest and affectionate self-consecration? Let us look to the great scene of Elijah's sacrifice on Carmel. When he had laid on the altar the whole flesh of the victim, as if to signify the whole-heartedness with which those would give themselves to God, whom He by His grace had converted, "*then* the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice." Can we not well imagine St. Paul saying of this, as of another event, "which things are capable of a further meaning?"¹ While insisting on the verity of the incident, we may see in it, as in so much else of the sacred history, a mysterious symbolism full of teaching for ourselves. That fire descending on the victim was, of course, the sign of Divine acceptance; but was it not also an image of that special gift of the Holy Spirit, bestowed on those who become a "living sacrifice,"—that pre-

¹ Gal. iv. 24, ἀλληγορούμενα.

cious gift of spiritual fervour,¹ kindling love to God in the heart, entering into and possessing the man's whole being, and filling it with the presence of Him who is love? For this we may well pray, in the words of a noble hymn, the special gift of our Church's saintly poet to the students of this College:²—

“Thou didst come that fire to kindle,—
Fain would we Thy torches prove,
Far and wide Thy beacons lighting
With the undying spark of love;
Only feed our flame, we pray Thee,
With Thy breathings from above!”

Yes, indeed, He does will this, for each of us in our day, as of old for His first servants. He is what He has ever been, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;” the changeless, ever-living, ever-loving Christ of Apostles and Evangelists, of Martyrs and Confessors, and of all who are departed in His faith; and *our* Christ also, as much as theirs, ever willing to help us, enlighten us, enkindle us, preside over our work, and reveal Himself to us as Teacher, Master, Saviour, God, full of grace and truth for our souls, if we will put ourselves frankly and

¹ “Fervour does not mean emotion;” it “consists in doing our duty to God by rule,—punctually, at the right time,—and exactly, that is, as perfectly as we can.” Cardinal Manning, *Sin and its Consequences*, p. 76.

² Keble's *Miscellaneous Poems*, p. 290.

heartily into His hands, and respond to the offers of His love. If others, as once of old,—if some even of those who have taken on them the vows of His priesthood,—“go back, and walk no more with Him,” let us cling to Him all the more earnestly; if we seem to hear Him ask again, “Will ye also go away?” let us practically, as well as in purpose and feeling, give Him that answer of the great spokesman of the Apostles, which may be called the earliest Christian Creed; “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

And, my brethren, we may be well assured of this, that days are coming, perhaps are close at hand, in which we shall need all the strength, all the light, all the comfort, which can be secured by Christian men through such a confession. I need not dwell on the forces of evil, which are arraying themselves against the Faith and Church of Jesus Christ; enough to say that, all around us, the moral, political, intellectual atmosphere is charged with elements of peril and confusion; that hostility to the kingdom of Christ, to the institutions in which its life is organised, and to the definite creed with which it is put in trust, is assuming every day an aspect more determined. Great and serious as would be the evils, in regard to

the future of England, of the formal separation, in England, of Church and State, there are trials nearer at hand which will demand from us whatever the grace of Christ can enable us to exhibit of patience and firmness, of hopeful perseverance in His work, of loyalty and devotion to His Name. O that we might, all of us, be faithful even to the end! O that we might, every one of us, prove ourselves true to the teaching of this place, to its precious recollections, to the examples which it has so richly and constantly supplied! Let us, on this day, gird up once more all the energies of heart and soul, of mind and will, as becomes soldiers of Christ, who know the greatness of the contest to which they have offered up their lives. How shall we face the dark future? Let us answer the question by thinking of the present. What is it which gives joy and brightness to this day's festival? Surely, my brethren (we may say it with humble hope and thankfulness), it is the presence of our Lord. We are gathered together at His feet; we are looking up into His face; we know that His blessing has rested, is resting, on the College and its work; and therefore "the joy of the Lord" may well be our strength, and we may be confident that He whose love inspirits us now, will guide, enlighten, uphold us hereafter.

So let us pray with a full heart, before we leave this beloved and favoured place,—pray with fervent, inportunate energy for the pardon of our past falls, and the acceptance of our renewed resolutions; for grace to abide in His love, to abound in His work, to be devout and single-minded, brave and patient, pure and true. For this let us, in the words of the Eastern Church, “commend ourselves, each other, and our whole life, to Christ our God;”¹ for this let us throw ourselves boldly on the infinite bosom of our Eternal Father’s pitying tenderness; for this let us, with Pentecostal echoes still in our ears, invoke the benignant Paraclete whom our repeated perversities have not wearied out, and say to Him, in words familiar and dear to all of us,—

“O most blessed Light Divine,
Shine within these hearts of Thine,
And our inmost being fill :
Where Thou art not, man hath nought,
Nothing good in deed or thought,
Nothing free from taint of ill.

“Heal our wounds; our strength renew;
On our dryness pour Thy dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away :
Bend the stubborn heart and will;
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;
Guide the steps that go astray.

¹ See Hammond, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, p. 92.

“ On the faithful, who adore
And confess Thee, evermore
In Thy sevenfold gifts descend :
Give them virtue's sure reward,
Give them Thy salvation, Lord,
Give them joys that never end.”¹

¹ The association of the thought of Ordination with Whitsuntide should not only be helpful as against that “naturalistic” view of the Church which would treat it as a mere development of the national life for moral and, in a general sense, for religious purposes, but as a reminder of the true method of dealing with prejudices which assume that it is somehow “unspiritual” to lay stress on forms or rites, or matters of external “organisation.” One who habitually recognises the Holy Spirit's presence as the vitalising force of the Church and her ministrations, will be best able to interpret and provide for the craving which this long popular theory misrepresents.

SERMON XXVIII.¹

CHRIST'S PRESENCE WITH HIS MINISTERS.

“And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?”—ST. LUKE xii. 42.

WE are assembled to witness, and by our sympathy and assent to take part in, one of the great acts which perpetuate the life and operations of the Kingdom which is not of this world. To thoughtful and well-instructed Church-people an ordination might well seem to preach its own sermon; but the Ordinal requires a sermon to be preached before the beginning of the rite, and recommends, as a subject, the spiritual importance of the Order then to be conferred. It is of the utmost consequence, with a view to our own profit, that we should on this occasion look through

¹ Preached in Holy Trinity Church, Gainsborough, July 3, 1887, at the ordination of an Assistant-Curate as Priest, by the Lord Bishop of Lincoln, on whom the writer was attending as one of his Examining Chaplains.

the outward to the inward, and recognise the spirit and life which give significance to the consecrated form. We are not concerned with a matter of mere official arrangement, like the appointment of a functionary by the authority of a society which men have formed for some religious or charitable purpose; it is a greater thing that is now before us,—an event in that spiritual and supernatural world which is centred in the throne of the Word Incarnate. Let us, then, briefly consider the light in which He, our Lord and Saviour, the Sovereign Pastor and Teacher, the Eternal High Priest, the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, would have us regard the Ministry which He has instituted in His Church. Let us go straight to the fountain-head, and learn from His own words and acts what is His interest in the Christian Ministry, what is its relation to His Person and His work.

The Twelve whom He carefully selected, and whom He called Apostles, sustained thenceforth two characters. Disciples they were from the first, and disciples they were to the end, in a sense as absolute as could belong to the position of the least distinguished among all who owned Him as Master. They were even bound to set an example of the simplest trust, the most unreserved obedience, the most self-sacri-

ficing devotion. In this respect they were to be, as it were, specimen Christians; and when He spoke to them as such, He saw in them the whole body of His future Church. But they had become something more. He had drawn them into an interior circle, had formed them into what we may call an Order. It has even been said by an author whose theme was "the Kingdom of Christ," that "if we called the four Gospels the Institution of a Christian Ministry, we might not go very far wrong, nor lose sight of many of their essential qualities;"¹ and he goes on to dwell on the gradual process by which these men were invested with these functions, as they grew into fitness for higher powers and for heavier responsibilities, from the day on which Christ sent them forth to preach to the house of Israel, to that Easter night when He breathed into them the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, or that still later day when He bade them "go and make converts of all nations, baptising them into" the one thrice Holy Name.

Our text is clearly a central passage, in regard to that office which He established in their persons, considered as His agents and His organs among men. "Ministers of God," "ministers of Christ;" any account to be given of these solemn titles must

¹ Maurice, *Kingdom of Christ*, ii. 148.

conform itself to the idea contained in the Lord's answer to St. Peter's question, "Speakest Thou this parable" about servants keeping watch "to us, or even to all?" For the answer, though itself in the form of a question, shows that Jesus was referring particularly to the Apostles in their capacity of ministerial agents. "Who then is that faithful and wise steward?" Observe the force of the illustration. A steward in any great Eastern household was the trusted head-servant, who represented the master, and acted for him towards the whole body of fellow-servants, presiding over them, keeping them to their work, serving out their supply of food, and generally seeing to their interests. In one such case we are told that the master "put all that he had into" the steward's hand;¹ and in a passage which may be taken as symbolically corresponding to our text,² we read of Eliakim being set over the household of a king of Judah in the room of Shebna. He is "clothed with a robe" and a "girdle," and "government is committed to his hand;" "and the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open and none shall shut, and he shall shut and none shall open." In all cases the office existed for the good of the household; the steward was but the

¹ Gen. xxxix. 4; cp. xxiv. 2, 10.

² Isa. xxii. 20-22.

image and instrument of his lord, responsible to him at every turn, and, as a well-known parable indicates, liable to be called in question for "wasting his goods."

Now, what did Christ intend to convey by speaking, in this way, of stewards under Himself? This, assuredly; that in His Church there should be officers commissioned by Him, and clothed with power from Him for the fulfilment of a high trust, as overseers bearing spiritual rule, and dispensers imparting spiritual food; generally, as His agents towards and for the benefit of His people. In short, there was to be a ministry formed not from below, but from above; an essential element in a Divine economy, not constituted by the Christian people for themselves, but provided for the people by Him who, in the fullest sense, as Sovereign Head of the Church, holds in His hand "the key of David." He constituted the Church, so to speak, in the persons of the Apostles; around them, as a centre of life and action, the body of believers was to be gathered;¹ through them, and through those who should succeed to any portion of their office, He was to hold intercourse with that body. This idea of the ministerial function, as created by Christ *for* the Church, is in accordance not only with the idea of the Sacraments, but with

¹ Gladstone, *Church Principles*, etc., pp. 201, 217.

the entire conception of the Gospel as a thing "sent, given, brought *to us*," to be received and used in faith; whereas the opposite view, which regards the ministry as devised by the Christian society for its own convenience, inverts the true order, and obscures the principle, as it may be called, of grace. No wonder that it is excluded by the whole tenor of the Christian Scriptures. Again, the motive for the creation of this ministry was to be Christ's own pastoral care for the flock whom, as we shall soon be reminded, "He bought with His death;" it was to exist, not for the sake of mere external order, but for the spiritual interest of the Church, that by its means the body might be kept in vital union with the Head. The stewards thus ordained were always to remember their awful, though glorious and animating, responsibilities; never to "lord it over" their fellow-servants, never to forget that they were but organs of their Master. The word which they should preach was to be His truth; the ordinances which they should minister were to be channels of grace from Himself. They were in all things to glorify Him, to sink their own personality in their office, and to see in their office a reflection of His Priesthood, of His Teachership, of His Royalty. He was to be their all in all. The sense of a commission from Him was at once to

support them under a sense of weakness, and to shame them out of a heartless self-assertion.¹ And their order was not to be a temporary arrangement, adapted to the conditions of a single age; rather, as a provision for needs inherent in humanity, it was to last as long as His Church itself; He was to find it in force at His return;—"Blessed is that servant whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing."

We have, then, in this passage an authentic charter of the Christian priesthood, as regarded in its action on Christ's part towards His Church as a whole. The description is an outline to be filled in by help of other words of His, or of Apostles who spake by His Spirit. Thus the two words used in St. John's account of the Pastoral Commission represent the two functions of administering food and exercising authority.² Thus the "portion of food" must be interpreted in the fullest sense, by what He said of the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, and, secondarily, as referring to all that revealed truth by which, in a sense, He wills to nourish the soul. St. Paul, again, takes up the idea of the text when he applies to himself and others the title of ministers, or "under-officers,"³ of God or of Christ; not delegates of the

¹ Cp. Gladstone, *Church Principles*, etc., p. 257, ff.

² John xxi. 15, 16.

³ 1 Cor. iv. 1.

Christian congregation, appointed by it as a society might appoint a committee, but instrumental agents ordained by Christ to maintain its corporate fellowship¹ with Him; stewards, as he expressly says, responsible to the Lord of the sacred household; yes, "gifts" of that Lord as glorified; bestowed on the Church for the "perfecting" of its structure, until we all come to "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

The collects for Ember week, and the collects of the Ordinal, ascribe the "appointment" of Holy Orders to God Almighty; and we, my brethren, have good reason to trace the historical ministry of the Church to Apostolic institution, and thus to see in it a chain which links us to the Church of the Apostles, and, above all, to Him who ordained them to be His stewards, and whose commission must be sought for in connexion with those who first received it. This is the thought which you should carry with you through the solemn service now to begin; Christ our Lord, invisibly present in all the ministrations of His

¹ The "individual priesthood" of the baptised depends on their membership in the body corporate; as individuals, they have the fullest right of access to God in Christ; but when they come together as members of the body, "the ministry is the necessary organ of the functions" of that body; C. Gore, *The Ministry of the Christian Church*, p. 86, a work in which the whole subject may be most advantageously studied.

Church, the true Baptiser, Celebrant, Confirmer, Absolver, is also the true Ordainer, now as of old. Let us look up to Him, who will presently, we believe, employ our Bishop's hands and voice as the instruments of His own personal action; and surely I need not ask you of this congregation to pray earnestly for the candidate who will advance, as it were, to the foot of His throne, and receive from Himself the grace and power of the priesthood,—to pray that he may lead the rest of his priestly life according to this beginning.

SERMON XXIX.

THE KING'S LAW IN THE HEART.

“But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.”—JER. xxxi. 33.

THE festival of the first evangelist,—at any rate, of him whose Gospel stands first among the four,—is rich in interest, not merely because its Saint is one whom grace, operating through the voice of the incarnate Fountain of grace, transferred from his desk, as we should say, in a custom office, to the seat of a prince in the “Kingdom which is not of this world;” not merely because of the indications given us of his character, who “rose at once, and left his gold,”—left, as St. Luke tells us, all that he had,—and forthwith showed his serious affection for his old companions in business, by bringing them face to face, at a great feast, with the Teacher whose call had revolutionised his own life;—not for these reasons only, but also because his Gospel,—the Gospel, as we may call it, of the Kingdom of heaven,—sets Jesus

forth in the aspect most attractive to those who had been brought to own Him as the promised Fulfiller of Israel's ancient and imperishable hopes.

Whether or not it was first composed in Hebrew, it is full of the Hebrew spirit as Christianised.¹ And, surely, whatever helps us to understand that spirit removes so much of vagueness from our conceptions of the first historic elements of Christian life and thought. We must, I think, confess that we do not very easily transport ourselves into the moral atmosphere of Hebrew Christianity. We feel more at home in St. Paul's Epistles, or in St. John's Gospel, than in the early sermons of St. Peter: we find it hard to appreciate those deep-seated scruples about "eating with men uncircumcised,"—still more, to make any sort of allowance for the motives which impelled a powerful, though extreme party among the believing Israelites, to counterwork, with a passionate, sleepless hostility, the influence of the great convert who proclaimed that "in Christ there was neither Greek nor Jew." It might be well, indeed, if we would take to heart some words of his own, and not forget that "branches of the wild olive," which have been

¹ "A Gospel designed for the pious Israelite, who desired to find in Christianity the perfect flower, of which Judaism was the root and stem." Trench, *Huls. Lect.*, p. 44.

"grafted into the good olive tree," have reason to "fear lest they should be broken off" in requital of a faithless self-reliance.¹ We know, of course, that there was in the very core of Christ's own teaching a certain principle which had to grow, which was not apprehended until a series of events had revealed its vast importance, and for the expression of which He chose, as His chief instrument, the man to whom, for that high purpose, He vouchsafed to speak amid a blaze of light from heaven. We know, in fact, that Paul was—not, as some have fancied, the superseder, but—on this subject of free and comprehensive grace, the special interpreter of Jesus. At the same time, if we wish to estimate those elements of the old Hebrew Christianity, which are of permanent value for all Christians of all time, the first Gospel will, of course, be full of instruction for this end; especially when compared with that other book of Christian Scripture, which most nearly resembles it in tone, the Epistle of St. James, "the Lord's brother" or near kinsman, but yet more thankful to be "the servant" of Him whom he describes by a title which could not have been used by any Ebionitish denier of His Divine pre-existence,—*"our Lord of glory."*²

¹ Rom. xi. 17-22.

² Cp. Schaff, *Hist. of Apostolic Christianity*, ii. 515, ff. In p. 618 he calls St. Matthew's "the didactic Gospel."

This "pastoral," addressed by him who acted as Bishop in the city which Jesus had so deeply loved to the whole body of Israelites who confessed Him as their Messiah, should be read along with that great collection of His words which we call the Sermon on the Mount, and which forms, so to speak, the ethical centre of the first Gospel. They fit well in with each other: the voice of the Lord is echoed by the voice of His servant. He is uttering, you remember, the laws of the new Kingdom: His emphatic "*I say unto you,*" announces the authority with which He speaks. He begins by describing the qualities of character required in those whom He and His Father can bless; He goes on to insist on real efforts after goodness in all its forms, on active and single-hearted charity, on the spiritual efficacy of true prayer, on pure simplicity of aim, on humility and sincerity, on active and not merely verbal obedience to "the will of the Father;" and He concludes with a piercing contrast between the man of words and feelings, who "builds the house" of his inward life "on the sand," and the man of deeds, who can feel a "rock" beneath his feet. He speaks throughout as a Lawgiver; the law of His Kingdom is a spiritual expansion, and, as He says, a "fulfilment" of the old Law; it is a Law, but a law "written in the heart;" and thus, as the Psalmist

has it, a "law present within the heart," to which the soul goes forth responsively; which psalmists, again, might speak of as a thing to love and rejoice in, a commandment refreshing, inspiriting, "giving light to the 'inward' eyes,"—as St. John says, with a sort of gentle irony, "not grievous,"—no, far from that, when taken hold of, as it were, by the right end.

And the same idea of duty to be welcomed, of loyalty to be shown by conduct, pervades the Epistle no less than the Sermon. Christians are bound to obey "the royal law," the law of the heavenly King; and, if they "look fixedly at it," they will find it a "law of liberty." But they must "mean work;" the belief which they hold, and rightly hold,—their orthodox conviction, as we might call it,—must be made living by action taking the form of faithful obedience. Apart from such action, it is "dead." Feeling, and thinking, and talking,—yes, and criticising others,—will never serve as substitutes for doing. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." How real a preacher he is! how he persists in going to the very heart of what is practical! how austere, though in love, he sweeps away the excuses which blind men to a sense of their own responsibilities, and points to the absolute certainty, the possible speedy approach,

of death and of judgment! He puts his finger on moral unreality in all its forms; he condemns a vulgar "respect of persons," a halving of obedience, bitter jealousy, fierce partisanship; he insists on the government of the tongue; he brings the thought of the Lord's presence to bear on all the homeliest details of life. Herein we observe the solemn awe with which the pious Hebrew contemplates human life as overshadowed by the presence of the Most High God; so that reverence was, with him, a religious first-principle, and St. Luke could fitly describe men of his spirit by a name¹ which pictures the careful handling of sacred things.

One might carry out yet further the parallel between the Sermon and the Epistle, especially on such points as prayer, and kindness, and the bridling of unruly tongues, and reliance on the changeless goodness of the Father; but I would rather ask you to do this for yourselves, and, just now, to gather from both books this one far-reaching lesson,—that our estimate of grace, and of faith, however conformable to St. Paul's inspired teaching, must not for a moment obscure our sense of moral obligation, as being, in his own words, "not without law to God, but under law to Christ." A "law of real

¹ ἡ εὐλαβεία. Cp. Trench on N. T. Synonyms, i. 39, 197.

liberty," as we have seen; a "law of the Spirit of life," a "law of Christ," a "law of faith," as St. Paul elsewhere describes it; but still, binding upon us, although even those who best observe it must come short of completeness, and all must look, for the meritorious cause of their acceptance, to the Passion and Death of the perfect Son of Man. This being understood, we see that as we are, at once, children of a Parent and servants of a King,—of Him whose "servants shall serve Him," in the courts of heaven itself, through all eternity,—so the commandments which He has laid upon us are not, for us, external voices, awakening no reply from our affections, or even provoking a resistance which tends to moral death; but they are "laws written in the heart," understood by souls in sympathy with their Author, accepted as the very conditions of "perfect freedom," and therefore to be obeyed in the power of the life-giving Spirit. This is the very contrast which St. Paul draws between "law" in the sense of a series of prohibitions, apart from the gift of grace and the principle of filial love, and "law" as a claim founded on our relation to a Father, a Redeemer, and a Sanctifier,—between the letter which killeth, and the spirit which giveth life.¹

¹ See St. Augustine, *de Spir. et Litt.* s. 22-26; Adam of St. Victor in Trench's *Sacred Latin Poetry*, p. 158; W. H. Mill, *Univ. Sermon*, p. 359.

Let us never be led astray by the imagination that, as Christians, we have outgrown the principle of the moral law. We never can get beyond it, for it grows out of our relation to God and to each other; our happiness and our wisdom lie in accepting it, as "freeing us from the law of sin and death," from the principle of moral declension. We must have one law or the other: let us take up the easy yoke of that Master of loyal souls, whose government is the effectual touch of His love. In all the details of everyday life we can, if we try, find occasions for serving and pleasing Him,—in St. Peter's words, for "sanctifying Him in our hearts as Lord:"¹ if we will but strive for this, He *will* reckon it as the love by which faith works, and by which "the requirement of the law" may be "fulfilled;" and thus if, before every choice or act, we place ourselves in His hands, ask for His guidance and His help, and *will*, in good earnest, to do just what He would have us to do, and never even in thought to do otherwise, we shall be giving full force to the prayer so frequently uttered, "Write all Thy laws in our hearts, O Lord, we beseech Thee."

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 15, R.V.; *ed.* Liddon, Bamp. Lect., p. 299.

SERMON XXX.

WARNINGS FROM THE SEVEN
CHURCHES.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.”—REV. ii. 7.

ONE could wish that these two chapters had been secured for reading in our Sunday services as such, so that ordinary churchgoers might be stimulated to study them at home. In default of such an arrangement, those who are not yet familiar with them would do well to go through them, let us say, on so many Sunday evenings,—taking each in its order for one Sunday, and thinking it carefully over when thus read. And however often we may read them, we shall always be conscious of their singular and imperishable charm. We shall feel what a splendour is shed over them at the outset, by that august vision of the Living One who was dead; we shall be awed by the majesty of those titles of His, with which they severally open, and attracted by the richness of those

promises of His, with which they severally conclude. The blessings pronounced on spiritual energy, on "love and faith, and service and patience," and the "little strength that keeps the word," the assurances of rewards to those who overcome, have been inspiring and uplifting forces in every stage of Christian experience; and their power is as fresh as it was when St. John returned from his exile. But, beyond this, we shall find in these brief passages what, in one sense, brings us yet nearer to our Lord than even His discourses in the Gospels: for here we have utterances of His mind and will coming straight down from that condition of glory, in which, ever since He ascended thither, He has been pleading for, and watching over, and scrutinising thoroughly, all Churches and all Christians. The Voice which we hear does not come from Galilee or Jerusalem, but from that heavenly throne before which we stand every day and all day long, throughout our trial-time on earth, in the changeless light of the countenance of the Most High.

"The seven candlesticks" amid which our Lord stood in the vision are, as He Himself explained, symbols of these seven Asiatic churches; and the "seven stars in His right hand" signified the Angels of those churches. But who are the Angels? The

word cannot well be here used of an angelic patron or guardian; for the "Angel" is evidently addressed as dwelling in his church, and as of like passions with it, so that he can fitly represent it, and be praised or blamed in reference to its condition. To idealise the "Angel" as a symbol of the moral condition or tendency characteristic of each several church, would compel us to treat lukewarmness or spiritual deadness as a star in our Lord's right hand. On the other hand, the interpretation of "the Angel" as "the collective body of presbyters" is so harsh and forced, that it could hardly have occurred to any one except in a controversial interest.¹ The simple view that the Angel means the chief pastor of each church,—the person, for instance, at Ephesus, who stood in the place of St. Timothy,—appears to fit the whole case;² and it is exactly consistent with the tone of the Apocalypse, which regards the earthly Church as in direct union with the heavenly, that the officer whom we should call the Bishop should be described under the image of a messenger from above. Of the seven churches, two are praised without any qualification:

¹ The notion that the "church," *e.g.*, of Ephesus was a single "congregation" under a single presbyter, described here as an "angel," is incompatible with Acts xx. 17.

² See "Speaker's Commentary," *in loc.*; Trench on Epist. to Seven Churches, p. 48.

three are praised on the whole, but fault is found on this or that head: a sixth is described as having but a few good members: a seventh incurs a rebuke unrelieved in its awful severity. Now, although it would be more comfortable to dwell on our Lord's words of encouragement and commendation, we may, at least in the first instance, profit more by observing the faults which, for love's sake, He censures. We shall find four types or kinds of delinquency, thus brought out under "the eyes that are as a flame of fire," the eyes of the "Searcher of reins and hearts:" and although the special forms of these faults would be more or less coloured by the circumstances of that time, it is obvious that, in their essence, they are such as beset Christians in all ages. They are recorded in a book which speaks ultimately to all Christians; they are "written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

(1) Let us look at the case of the Church of Ephesus. It is highly commended: St. Paul had formerly exhorted its assembled presbyters to watch against "perverse teachers,"¹ and had afterwards left St. Timothy at Ephesus with a special charge to "hold fast the model of sound words, to reprove, rebuke, exhort, to watch, to fight the good fight, to

¹ Acts xx. 30.

endure hardness as Christ's good soldier."¹ And the Ephesian Church, under this teaching, had been active, laborious, self-sacrificing, unwearied in the cause of Christianity, zealous against "those who were evil," keen-sighted in detecting Antinomian impostors who "called themselves apostles, and were not."² Strictness, orthodoxy, energy,—all these the Church of Ephesus, and its Angel, had exhibited on an ample scale; and of these our Lord says, "I know thy works." What was there, then, to be set against this excellence? Our Version makes our Lord say, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee;"—as if the "somewhat" were not much. But it should be "I have this against thee;" and the thing which He proceeds to specify is a grave matter indeed: "Thou hast left thy first love," meaning, apparently, "thy first love for Me, and for My Father;" for the words are clearly based on that pathetic remonstrance sent to Judah through Jeremiah, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals;"³ as if to say, "Where is that love now? why is that kindness now chilled?" Observe,—the fault is not this, that the first emotions of a soul converted to God, as we say,—the warm passionate feelings which

¹ 2 Tim. i. 13; iv. 2, 5; 1 Tim. vi. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 3.

² Rev. ii. 2, ff.

³ Jer. ii. 2.

belong to "the beginnings of obedience,"¹—pass away in course of time: no, they are meant to "give an impulse that may carry the soul over its first obstacles," and then they have done their work. The fault is this, that these feelings have not been consolidated, as it were, into active principles; and therefore that love which should be a steadfast habit of practical devotion and single-hearted loyalty to a Divine Friend, as the supreme Object of the soul's affections, is sought for, and is not found. In this most serious sense, it is written, "Thou hast left thy first love." And this is, as our Lord says, a fall, which needs repentance and return to the first works. Do we not see here how easy it is for persons to be zealous in their orthodoxy, and, beside this, ready to spend and be spent in the work of the Church and of religion, while yet their very activity in these interests, excellent as it is, may blind them to the fact that their love to Christ, as to a living and personal Lord and Saviour, is waxing cold,—that He does not reign in their hearts?

(2) The character of the two Churches of Pergamum and Thyatira is practically one and the same. Both are praised,—the one for holding fast the faith in specially trying circumstances, the other for charity,

¹ Newman, Sermons, i. 115.

and service, and faith, and patience, and good works increasing as time went on.¹ And they have one and the same fault, which is just the opposite to that of the Church of Ephesus; "I have a few things against thee," or, "I have this against thee," says our Lord,² referring to a deficiency of zeal against teachers who relaxed the Christian standard on questions of moral conduct, thereby imitating, though unconsciously, him who would not venture to curse Israel, but would seduce them into heathenish impurity, or that wicked queen of Ahab who made Baal-worship fashionable,³—and verifying, as against themselves, the stern words of St. Peter against those who "promised liberty" while they were but the "slaves of corruption." These Churches, and their Angels, did not themselves adopt, but did not strenuously "hate" errors of this kind. They ought to have testified boldly against such base perversions of the idea of freedom; to have said, in effect, what a great English poet said long afterwards—

"License they mean when they cry Liberty,
For who loves that, must first be wise and good."

And is there no warning here for us English Christians? The influences of our time are not very favourable to that sort of zeal which firmly upholds

¹ Rev. ii. 13, 19.

² Rev. ii. 14, 20.

³ Rev. ii. 20 probably refers to a living female exponent of anti-nomian Gnosticism.

religious restraints. Public opinion would, of course, condemn any flagrant patronage of immoral freedom among Christians; but, short of this, do we not see around us indications of a temper which, to say the least, requires to be watched by all who would remember that freedom is perfected in the service of God? Popular writers have often been eloquent in praise of the genial aspects of Christianity; but have they cared to remember that, as centred in the Cross, it has also a stricter side? Among those, too, who are vehement against a Puritanic Sabbath-keeping, one may fear that there are some who revolt against that old and good principle of English Churchmen's family life, whereby some kinds of occupation or of amusement are ruled to be unfitting and wrong on the Lord's Day. Assuredly we shall do well to be on our guard, not only against a zeal which forgets charity, but against a want of zeal which means a want of faithfulness. Let us beware of a secularised Christianity.¹ It may be, for a while, popular; but we are not to make religion attractive by any method which may seem for the moment promising; our duty is to be faithful witnesses, to speak the truth in love. They "that love the Lord" are as much bound as in the days of Psalmists to

¹ See Newman, *Serm. i.* 312, ff.

"hate the thing that is evil." He in whom, of all the servants of Christ, love to God and man was most eminently embodied,—he who saw the Patmos-vision, and was commanded to write on Christ's behalf to the Seven Churches,—he has said of all that mass of social opinions, aims, habits, which refuses to be subject to the law of God and the mind of Christ, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;" and has pointed out the principle of "victory over the world" as consisting in a faith which is inseparable from purity, and a love which "keeps the commandments."¹

(3) There remain two other warnings to be derived from the messages conveyed in the third chapter—warnings of a yet severer kind, although in each case it is indicated that the ground which has been lost may be surely, if laboriously, regained. Of both the churches in question it has been observed² that they appear to be free from adversaries without, and from false teachers within; but this immunity is far from keeping them right. What, then, shall we say of the fault found with the Church of Sardis? It is described in language somewhat indistinct; but the vagueness, in itself, is perhaps the more awe-striking. "I know

¹ 1 John ii. 15; v. 3-5.

² Trench on Epistles to Seven Churches, p. 149.

thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Become watchful, and strengthen the things"—meaning, it seems, the persons—"which remain, which are going to die," or, "were at the point of death. For I have not found thy works fully done before God.¹ Remember how thou hast received and heard." Then again, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy." What do we gather from all this? At any rate, a combination of fair religious credit with a grievous lack of religious vitality. This Christian society had begun its course really well, and even now it stands well in the opinion of its fellows; it is thought to be in a real sense "living." But He that looks below the outward appearance sees all too clearly that this show of life is hollow, that it has fallen from the purity and simplicity of its earlier faith. Now, it is, in the words of the old Greek poet, "A fair outside with festering ills below;"² and the allusion to those few who "have not defiled their garments" may indicate that an infection of unchristian laxity had told largely, and all but fatally, on the spiritual life of those Christians in Sardis who were

¹ Or, "have found no works of thine . . . before my God," R.V.

² Soph. CEd. Tyr. 1396.

not included among the few. Perhaps it will be asked, "Why, then, does our Lord in one sentence say, 'I have not found thy works fully accomplished,' if He really perceived in the character of this Church a condition so positively evil?" The answer would be, that here we have a sample of that solemn Scriptural irony, whereby the true amount of evil in man is sometimes understated, in order to bring home to the human conscience what else has to be said,—what is left for that conscience to do, in the way of filling up the outline. Of Solomon in his fall it is written, "His heart was not perfect with the Lord his God." "No, indeed," we say, "very far from it:" and so here, Christians who held "the form of godliness," but had, in effect, made themselves alien from its "power," are depicted, in this one sentence, as coming far short of complete obedience; and the very guardedness of this one rebuke, from the lips of that Judge who alone is perfect in equity, seems the rather to enhance one's estimate of the woeful deficiency.

To us, then, assuredly, the case of this Sardian Church is eloquent on the imperative need of vigilance against sins which do not affect our standing before others,—which are consistent with our having religiously a name that we live. "O cleanse Thou me from my secret faults!" should be the urgent

prayer of one who desires to escape this censure. "Do not leave me to myself, or to the good opinion of my friends; show me where I am intrinsically wrong, and put me right, by whatever means, right with Thee, down to the very roots of my inward being,—Thou that desirest to find, and art so mercifully willing to create, truth in the inward parts, who art so willing to call a heart perfect when by Thy help it becomes upright and single. Help me to remember,"—let the soul add with all earnestness,—“how I have received and heard, to hold fast, and repent; that what in me was dead or dying may rise again to a fresh life, and my name may not be blotted out of the book of life, but confessed, after all, before the Father and His angels, when Thou comest to judge the secrets of men.”

(4) Last of all, we come to a case perhaps more familiar than any of the others in this series. The Church of Laodicea is a proverb for lukewarmness. The awful words in which our Lord conveys His rebuke to it have sunk deep into the heart of Christendom. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold or hot,—I am about"—the strong image used is one of intensest loathing. But why should He say He would

prefer to have them "either cold or hot"? The hot, of course, are the fervent in faith; He might well wish them to be kindled with that fire. But the cold—who are they? It would seem that they are souls as yet external to the influences of the Gospel: "untouched," as an excellent commentator words it, "by the powers of grace."¹ Such, he adds, were the publicans and the harlots, who had not wasted grace, because it had not been theirs to trifle with. Such, says an old Christian writer,² who was fired with indignation at the bad lives of professing Christians, were the heathens who stood outside, cold because ignorant. There was hope of them,—that when they should hear the word of life, they would welcome it, as the first word from God that had ever sounded in their ears, and wakened in their hearts a fresh sense of glorious possibilities:—"What must I do to be saved?" But the Christian who is not of this class, and yet is not warmed and enkindled by the Religion which he calls his own; he who has, from earliest years, heard all that can be told him about Christ, has "tasted the good word of God," and lived within access to all

¹ Trench on Epistles to Seven Churches, p. 185.

² Salvian, *de Gub. Dei*, iv. 19. So Jeremy Taylor, *Serm.* 13, part 2, that although a lukewarm Christian is "absolutely nearer the Kingdom of God than he that is not yet set out, yet accidentally . . . he is worse, in greater danger," etc.

the means of salvation, and yet is not in earnest,—what is to be said or hoped of him? The grandeur and loveliness of the Creed which he professes, the vastness of the truths which it reveals, the views which it opens of the meaning of life and death, as seen in the light of the Passion and Resurrection,—these things do not really move him. He will own them to be real, will say they must by all means be held fast; but his deepest interest is not in them. It was said of old as to the Christians amid a heathen society, that “they, as if by a law of their being, craved for the Truth, and maintained it entire, as men who cared for their own salvation.”¹ Here is the point: your lukewarm Christian does not care. He will repeat any orthodox formula,—will attend punctually on Christian ordinances,—will, perhaps, give a good deal of thought to Church affairs, or, perhaps, to details of ceremonial observance, or even to questions of theology,—and be well content with himself on that score; but, after all, it is surface-work with him, he has no true idea of striving to enter in at

¹ Tertull. *Apol.* 46. Compare St. Bernard, *Serm.* 3 on the Ascension, c. 7, that “lukewarmness arises from the fact that men’s will is not yet cleansed, they do not wish for good in proportion to their knowledge of it, being drawn aside by earthly desire; so that they rarely direct their affections towards God, and their compunction is not continuous, but a matter of an hour, or, more truly, of a moment.” Cp. *Imit. Chr.* i. 11.

the strait gate. He takes the things of the soul, and of the eternal future, much too easily; and therefore his whole religious life, if one can call it so, is a sham,—an odious sham in the pure eyes of Heaven,—while yet, as our Lord proceeds to say, he thinks he is rich and increased with goods, and has need of nothing, and knows not that he is “the wretched and pitiable one, and poor and blind and naked.” Do you ask why, amid his habitual apathy, he fancies himself to be in so hopeful a state? Is not this the answer,—that the immense, the terrible incongruity between such a fact as the Christian Faith, and such a fact as a languid and spiritless adhesion to it, puts all the spiritual faculties out of gear? One who is in this state cannot see things as they are; he becomes the victim of any form of self-deceit; that which best feeds his self-complacency, and fools him most completely with the Pharisee’s dream of being all that he ought to be, and better than other men are, will hold him most absolutely in its power, and blind him most fatally to all that he should see, for his own soul’s sake, as to himself and God. Want of earnestness means incapacity for the Truth; and very hard it is, in such a case, for the man to be roused from his gross insensibility, and shamed into confessing, honestly and humbly, how much he wants of the gold, and

the white raiment, and the eye-salve, which he may even yet buy of the Faithful Witness at the cost of self-renouncing prayer.

Brethren, it is only too easy for us, amid our atmosphere of comforts, to become lukewarm while we think we are good Christians. Many English people make a sort of god of their respectability, especially when they can deck it in a Christian garb; when they are church-goers, and perhaps communicants, and would say, if asked, that they thought themselves on the straight road to Heaven. They have a Pharisaism of their own, while they think the ancient Pharisaism alike shocking and contemptible. They do not examine their own souls; they do not face their real condition; they keep searching thoughts about sin and judgment at arm's length; they apply hard words, perhaps, to those who treat God's Kingdom as a reality; they have subsided into a conventional religion: "and what will they do in the end thereof?"

One word more, for our comfort if we have ears to hear,—if, having heard, we mean to profit. How marvellously varied, how rich and versatile in its aspects of gracious activity, is that presentation of our Divine Redeemer's love, which relieves the austerity of rebuke even in this seventh epistle, and there,

perhaps, more winningly than in any of the rest! It was much to say to a struggling Church that He knew all its difficulties, how it dwelt even where Satan's throne was,—as He might say in spirit to some young servant of His who was striving to live purely and devoutly amid godless fellow-workmen or unbelieving fellow-students; it was much to take full account of the "little strength,"—nothing very heroic, but still genuine and faithful, of those who had not denied His Name; but what was it to say even to the lukewarm and the slothful, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten,"—and then, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me"? Do we not understand something of that which is contained in these deeply pathetic words? When we have been drifting into a fatal self-contentment, or pleasing ourselves with a religiousness which is but sentimental and unreal, we have sometimes been reminded by a casual word, by a movement of feeling or thought, perhaps by a sentence in a book, that this will not do,—that if God and Christ are realities, we ought to be different from what we are; and this sudden flash of conviction, this impulse towards a worthier life, what are they but the tokens of One who stands at the

door and knocks? He stands there at this very moment; He knocks, He speaks, He begs us to open the door and let Him in. Assuredly our duty and our happiness consist in throwing it wide as with both hands, and praying Him to enter and take supreme possession of the being which is His by the rights of a Creator and Redeemer. And for those who persevere in thus responding to His grace, He reserves, in spite of all their former unfaithfulness, the benediction ensured to a Philadelphia or a Smyrna; Laodicea herself, if she is zealous and repents, will be reckoned among those who "overcome."

SERMON XXXI.

FAITH'S RESOURCE UNDER TRIAL.

“Then thought I to understand this, but it was too hard for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God. . . . It is good for me to hold me fast by God, to put my trust in the Lord God.”—Ps. lxxiii. 15, 16, 27 (P.B.V.).

WE sometimes hear persons talk of “favourite psalms,” as they do of favourite hymns or favourite collects. The phrase, if looked at strictly, is hardly consistent with that reverence which shrinks from even seeming to patronise the word which cometh from the Lord. But what is meant, of course, is that certain passages, as in other books of Scripture, so in that wonderful “book of sacred poetry which has nothing like it, or second to it,”¹ do come specially home to this or that soul, and concentrate, for it, what Keble has said generally of the “eye of God’s Word” as “where’er we turn, ever upon us.”² They seem to single us

¹ Church, Gifts of Civilisation, etc., p. 391.

² Christian Year, St. Bartholomew.

out individually; in one expressive phrase, they "find us;" in their voices we hear a significant undertone, "I have an errand unto thee." Various psalms will probably occur to us as likely, in various ways, to speak thus emphatically to the heart. The twenty-third, the fifty-first, the eighty-fourth, the hundred and third, the hundred and thirtieth, or the hundred and forty-fifth, are but a few of the many which, as they come round in their course, are welcomed as "dear familiar strains," which have helped the worshipper just where he most needed help, given him words which exactly suited his case, and verified for him that deep experience of St. Athanasius—"In this book I find delineated the whole life of men, their dispositions of soul and movements of thought."¹

And some of us, I think, must associate the fourteenth day of the month with the exquisite rhythm of that sweet, tranquillising, sustaining assurance which breathes in the opening of its first evening psalm, "Truly God is loving unto Israel, even unto such as are of a clean heart," followed as it is by a record of the stormy passage which had led the Psalmist to that "desired haven." "Nevertheless my feet were almost gone, my treadings"—at one

¹ Athan. Epist. ad Marcell., 30.

time—"had wellnigh slipped." It is the picture of a severe internal trial; and this, it has been said, gives to the psalm "an increasing religious importance as the world grows older."¹ We are apt sometimes to assume that the Biblical servants of God were exempt from all such troubles; that faith cost them no effort; that they spent all their days in a cloudless consciousness of the Divine presence ever at hand; that they never had to face doubts, or ponder urgent spiritual questions. Whole books of Scripture, if we think, will show us that this was not so; not to speak of Job or of "the Preacher," the most sensitive of the prophets was for a time bewildered with the tremendous obscurities which appeared to veil the righteousness of God's universal government: that it was, somehow, all righteous he felt certain; yet, as if to ease a bursting heart, he craved leave to "reason" with the Eternal: "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?"² And the last of "the goodly fellowship" had to deal with men who bitterly complained that it was "vain to serve God, and keep His ordinance," while those who tried His patience by pride or by wickedness did yet so conspicuously get their way in this world.³ And

¹ A. S. Farrar, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 7.

² Jer. xii. 1.

³ Mal. iii. 14, 15.

the Psalmist before us, like him who begins his song with "Fret not thyself," has been sorely exercised by this old problem, which would be specially difficult for pious souls which had received no distinct revelation as to the future, and were therefore apt to assume that God's justice must assert itself in this life, if it were to assert itself at all. The sight of successful crime had roused in him that passion of wrathful unhappiness which, long afterwards, a master of Greek thought described as "just indignation."¹ Offenders against laws divine and human were yet in the full tide of prosperity. "They come in no misfortune like other folk; they enjoy more than heart can wish; their lives are one long arrogant triumph; they laugh at the idea of God's judgment: and He lets them die without pain, and as they have lived. Why is it—why is it?" He feels as if he had "cleansed his heart in vain," as if his religion had been all to no purpose. We can imagine the hard struggle in his mind against the impulse to find relief in a wild despairing outbreak; the grave and faithful self-restraint, which kept him from doing harm to the average run of religious people by venting the doubts from which they were happily free. Those doubts were as yet not really

¹ Arist. Rhet. ii. 9.

more than doubts ; a solution was still possible, and we may be sure that he heartily longed to find it ; and he tells us where and how it was found.

Most pathetic, most instructive, is the simple account of that experience which finally brought him, as "through fire and water, into a wealthy place," where his soul could enjoy repose. "Then thought I to understand this, but it was too hard, too painful, for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God ; then understood I the end of these men."

Worship, in company with fellow-believers, had at once a quieting and illuminating power ; it freshened and confirmed his sense of a righteousness which was infinite and, in spite of all appearances, supreme ; it furnished him with that sort of evidence which, although partial, served him well at the time, as it had sufficed for that other Psalmist who had "seen the ungodly in great power, but as one passed by, lo ! he was not." After all, wickedness did not really answer ; the reign of high-handed sinners was but brief ; he saw that in several cases it ended very suddenly, as if by a fall from a lofty precipice. Now he could breathe more freely, and even accuse himself of having been stupid as an animal in vexing himself about an apparent failure of Divine justice, instead of staying his soul on the Most High. For the future

he would know better; he would cast himself absolutely upon God; "whom else had he,"—whom else could he need to have, in heaven or on earth, as his resource, his strength, his guide, his portion? In this he rises to a higher level of faith than had been reached by the Psalmist just quoted. He looks not to mere earthly readjustments, but straight to the one satisfaction of man's being.¹ "They that go far from Thee," he cries, "shall perish; they that are false to Thee shall be uprooted; for me"—the words are weighted with a new intensity of conviction—"for me it is good to draw near to God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell all Thy works," may testify to others of what Thou hast done for me.

Modern Christians may not often be troubled by the peculiar kind of trial which pressed so hardly on a serious-minded Israelite. But other forms of the same difficulty will be just as perilous to us, if we do not meet them in the right spirit. The presence of evil, moral and physical, in a world which is called God's world, has become increasingly appalling to the imagination, and often increasingly menacing to faith. We are peremptorily told that we are trying in vain to shirk a fact which our theology cannot account

¹ See Bishop Perowne, *in loc.*

for. High ground is taken, and we are summoned in the name of "veracity" to look this terrible phenomenon in the face, and boldly to ask ourselves whether religious belief can stand before it. We are bidden to drop our sham supports, to dispense with "consolations" which are artificial, and to accept, if so it must be, a non-religious view of life, which may be dreary at first sight, but which will approve itself to sincere minds as being true. Of course, this means practical, if not theoretic, atheism; and we may say with confidence that anything is more probable than atheism for moral and spiritual beings like ourselves. But, short of this extremity, we know that questions which did not greatly, if at all, disturb our fathers are nowadays causing many a foot to slip; questions raised by science or by criticism, as well as questions growing out of the enormous mass of misery, crime, and ignorance which lies all around us, and seems to contradict our belief in a God who cares for all His creatures, individually as well as collectively. And then, very often when the spirits are depressed, the imagination takes up with unbelieving suppositions, gives them a superficial importance, and dreamily speculates as to the possibility of their turning out true. There is, all the while, a reserve of real belief in the background; the man is

essentially on the side of faith; but gloomy ideas, inconsistent with faith, haunt him like sad faces in a dream, and make him ask, in effect, like the solitary Forerunner in his prison, "Art Thou He that should come?" What if Christianity should have to be given up? Nay, what if one were really without a God to cling to, when "flesh and heart" and life itself shall "fail"?

Whether faith be actually shaken, or whether it be only assailed, let the Psalmist's remedy be tried, but on a sufficiently large scale. "Until I went into the sanctuary of God." How often will it help the troubled soul to do this quite literally! The worship of the Church of Christ is of itself a witness for Him. It brings us into felt contact with the solidity and the majesty of religion; it lifts us up into a serene and radiant atmosphere; it sets in motion a sympathetic force, which can suspend the power of individual misgivings; it takes us out of ourselves, and reminds us of the Divine facts which are intended to furnish an external ground of belief, independent of our own changeful feelings, and thereby to supply a most real and urgent need. But the Psalmist's phrase has other applications: we do not find our God merely in church. We enter into His sanctuary whenever we exercise that faculty of the spirit which

recognises Him as its true Father, as the source of our interior personal life. We enter into His sanctuary whenever we consciously lay ourselves open to those spiritual influences which are thus akin to the deepest elements of our being. We enter into His sanctuary whenever we thus advance from the conviction of our own spiritual personality to the thought of a God, living and moral, who is its source, from whom a further revelation was reasonably to be expected, and who has, according to the creed of Christendom, bestowed this boon in the person of Jesus Christ. We enter into His sanctuary when in the strength of that sovereign conviction, if distinctly called upon to do so, we examine and confront the objections urged against our faith. We enter into His sanctuary whenever we give weight to the testimony borne by the vast and beautiful world of Christian goodness; by those pious lives and peaceful deaths which could not, we must feel, be dependent on a mere illusion; by those "greater works" of Christ in the renewal of human character and the transformation of human life, of which His outward healings wrought on the blind, the lame, the deaf, the lepers, the very dead, were as shadows cast before. We enter into the very Holy of Holies when we "look away from all else to Jesus," and study that life which is the most per-

suasive of all evidences; and when, with eyes fixed on it, we earnestly try so to think and speak and act as we believe that He would have us to do.

“Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended, shall not find occasion of stumbling, in Me.” Could words more tenderly express what St. Paul calls His “gentleness” or His equity?¹ He knew that there would be “difficulties;” that faith would have to fight her way through adversaries; that questions would be pressed to which, in this world, no full reply could be given; that prejudice, misapprehension, or impatient cravings for “sight” or sensible evidence, would lead many to “go back and walk with Him no more.” He knew it, He knows it now. But as then, so now, He is ever ready to hear the honest, not hopeless, petition: “I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.” For answer, He points to the open door of His Father’s spiritual sanctuary. Let us breathe the air of that solemn precinct, in some one or other of its many chambers, wherein we may be “kept from the strife of tongues,” and brace up again the relaxed nerves of our faith; let us beg Him to attract us by the unexhausted power of His “uplifting,”² to unfold to us, as we can bear it, the beauty of His absolute truth and holiness, to guide us, amid

¹ 2 Cor. x. 1.

² John xii. 32.

the bewilderments of this world, by His counsel, and at last to receive us into His glory.

O well for those to whom at last, after any amount of toil, or weariness, or anxiety, or, perhaps, prolonged bodily anguish, this comes, this supreme compensation, to be "present, to be at home, with the Lord." . . . It has come, we doubt not, within the last few days, to one of whom, just now, it is hard for his friends to speak. Yet something must be said; one could not quite be silent under the oppressive sorrow of that immense loss which has unexpectedly fallen upon this House, upon Oxford, upon the whole Church of England, upon many who for years have counted his friendship among the chief blessings of this life. Something must be said; but what? One cannot, here and now, attempt to dwell on the great career which has so lately closed, in what may be called its public aspects. Of course we remember him as a preacher of supreme excellence, as a constructive Catholic theologian of the first order, as an unwavering defender of the spiritual character of the Church, and of the rights which that character involved. But now, while the grave in his own vast cathedral has not yet opened to receive his corpse, we here in Christ Church may be pardoned if we think rather of the Henry Liddon whom we ourselves have known

so long, and have loved so admiringly, and, let me add, so gratefully. We recall the charm of that intense, unique personality, at once so commanding and so attractive; that conversation, so enriching, so illuminating, with its brilliance and its humour, its fulness and energy of thought, its refined and perfect accuracy of expression; we think of what he was as a friend,—how tender, helpful, and faithful, how pathetically generous in his estimate of the most trivial kindnesses; of the pains which he would take in answering questions even when he was wellnigh tired out,—of the sympathy which he would spend on the difficulties or the anxieties of others,—of the exquisite old-world courtesy which flowed forth, simply and without effort, to persons of all sorts and conditions, on the principle of “honour due to all men”¹ for the Son of man’s sake. Yes, and we must needs also be mindful of the responsibility incurred by frequent intercourse with one who could always be relied upon as an example of high unselfishness, of absolute superiority to the influences of what St. John calls “the world,” which, in the words of this day’s Epistle, was “crucified” for him through Christ. Even those who did not always agree with him must always have been sure of him on that point, and would have

¹ See Liddon, *Univ. Sermon*. i. 76; *cp. Adv. Sermon*. ii. 342.

understood him had they heard him say, as I have heard him say more than once, "Whatever happens, one must keep one's loyalty to our Lord; to compromise *that* would be the worst of all bargains; nothing else will answer in the long run." The fact was that he had his eye fixed, ever more and more steadfastly fixed, on the end of life, on the world unseen, on the judgment to come. Those who know his published Advent Sermons will remember passage after passage, in which the certainty and the significance of death are pressed home on the mind with an austere yet most charitable emphasis. "It is certain," he says, "that we shall die, and in death we shall be, each of us, alone. None other can enter into that tremendous experience which awaits us all. To prepare for death, then, is the true work, the common sense of life."¹ "You do not know how you will die, or when, or where."² In words which perhaps were prompted by a well-known poem from the hand of the great Cardinal who passed but shortly before him into the world of spirits,³ he

¹ i. 82; cp. ii. 387.

² ii. 303.

³ "For now it comes again,
That sense of ruin which is worse than pain,
That masterful negation and collapse
Of all that makes me man," etc.

Newman, *The Dream of Gerontius*.

proceeds to speak of the "approach, stealthy or rapid, of a sense of internal collapse and ruin," of "the advancing, overwhelming darkness, the felt retreat of life, first from this sense or organ, then from that . . . the last spasm, the last sigh, and then," in "the first five minutes after death," the awful "entrance on a new and wonderful world," involving, "under new conditions, a direct apprehension of God, such as in this life is impossible."¹

Just a few more words, if you will bear with them. He of whom we are thinking did live, ever more and more consciously, in the presence of God, as it encompasses and dominates the soul that has learned to behold the glory of the Father in the person of the co-eternal Son, made flesh for us men and for our salvation. Yes, on this "Holy Cross Day,"² we may well think of him as devoted to the Crucified Redeemer, the infallible, impeccable, adorable Lord Jesus. All his thoughts about religion, including his contention for the Catholic faith as embodied in the creeds of the Church, or for the operations of the Incarnate life, by means of the Holy Spirit, through sacramental ordinances, and ultimately even all the convictions which, as an English Churchman, he held

¹ Adv. Serm., ii. 69, 76 : cp. ib. 15.

² September 14, 1890, Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

so fast, rose up into, and took their force and meaning and sanction from that fact which for him was above all, beneath all, around all—the reality, the presence, the “rights,”¹ the character of God as revealed in Christ. “God and the Soul” is the title of the discourse which stands at the opening of that first volume of his Oxford sermons, which was originally entitled, “Some Words for God.” One which I heard him utter from this place, full thirty years ago, concludes with an exhortation to rise above the world of sense, to realise “the life of grace,” to “pierce the veil by prayer.”²

Here, then, is at least one lesson which the life of this great Christian enforces on us: “Hold fast,” it says, “your religious loyalty to a living God and a personal Christ.” And if we could imagine him as speaking to us now from the Paradise where assuredly he sees, in more or less open vision, the Lord to whom he consecrated that rich array of faculties with a single-heartedness so entire and so consistent, we might well suppose him to take up the Psalmist’s words, and to assure us that it *is* good, the truest good, for us to draw near to God, to hold fast by God,

¹ Adv. Sermon. ii. 26; Univ. Sermon. i. 13.

² Univ. Sermon. i. 305 (a sermon preached in Oxford Cathedral on Ascension Day, 1860).

to put our trust in His truth and love, to beg that He will be the strength of our souls and the light of our consciences, will "hold us by our right hand" in our passage through this world, and be our "portion" in life, in death, and for eternity.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON THE "EXINANITION" AND THE ATONEMENT.

REFERENCE has been made in the second of the preceding sermons to the necessity of guarding against an undue extension of what is usually called the *Kenôsis*, or "Exinanition" (from the Vulgate of Phil. ii. 7, *semetipsum exinanivit*). And while these pages are passing through the press, I have observed a similar warning given in some excellent notes on that memorable context, by the Rev. H. C. G. Moule ("The Epistle to the Philippians with Introduction and Notes," in the series called "The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges"). It will be well to quote the following: "Of recent years much has been said upon this great mystery in the direction of proving or suggesting that, during the days of His flesh, the Lord (practically) parted with His Deity, becoming the (Incarnate) Son of God only in His glorification after death. Such a view seems to contravene many plain testimonies of the Gospels, and most of all the pervading tone of the Gospels, as they present to us in the Lord Jesus on earth a Figure meek and lowly indeed, but always infinitely and mysteriously majestic. . . . It is enough for us to know that His . . . Exinanition, *Kenôsis*, was profoundly real; that He was pleased, as to His holy

manhood, to live in dependence on the Spirit; while yet we are sure that the inalienable basis of His Personality was always, eternally, presently, Divine."

Theologians of eminence, ancient and modern, who have firmly grasped this cardinal truth, have yet sometimes spoken as if that of which our Lord "emptied Himself," in the act of "assuming the form of a servant," was "the form of God," *μορφὴ Θεοῦ*, and have explained this phrase to mean the Divine glory in its manifestations. But if *μορφή* in the case of the "servant," i.e. of man as the servant of God, is to be carefully distinguished from the *σχήμα* in which He was "found as man" according to verse 8, so that the former will mean the essential character of manhood, or the human mode of existence, and the latter the "outward presentation" of which other men's senses could judge (as Archbishop Trench says in his "Synonyms of the New Testament"), we must surely give to *μορφὴ Θεοῦ* a sense which will make it practically inseparable from, though not properly identical with, *οὐσία*.¹ Given, then, the doctrine of Christ's Divinity as belonging to, and inhering in, His eternal personality, it must surely appear impossible for Him to lay aside His "essential character" as God, or to suspend His Divine "manner of existence," when He condescended to adopt the "essential character" of humanity or the human "manner of existence." One who is God cannot cease to live as God: we might as well say that He could cease to

¹ St. Hilary's assertion of an "*evacuatio formæ*" which was not an "*abolitio naturæ*" (de Trin. ix. 14) is accounted for by his identification of "*forma*" with "*habitus*."

live at all. The higher *μορφή*, in this sense of the term, could not be superseded; the lower *μορφή* could but be superadded. The mystery of the Incarnation must involve the co-existence, in the Incarnate Christ, of two distinct spheres of action and consciousness; and if this were not admitted, the gravest consequences would follow in regard to our idea of the immutability of Godhead,¹ and our estimate of the efficacy of that redemptive work which Christ "finished" in the lowest depth of His *ταπείνωσις*. As Dean Church has expressed it, the Christ who is presented to us in the Gospel narrative "does what is most human, but lives absolutely in the Divine:" in all His human acts, "He of whom we are reading is yet all the while that which His own words can alone express, 'even the Son of Man, which is in heaven.'"²

Moreover, the context itself would suggest that as the Son, at the moment of His condescension, was "already existing in the form of God," that of which He "divested Himself" was not that in which He then existed, but the unlimited exercise of the prerogatives attaching to His co-equality. This is further illustrated by the close connection between the doctrinal statement as such and the moral exhortation which it is brought in to emphasise. The Apostle is deprecating self-assertion, and enforcing self-forgetfulness. He says in effect, "You must not be always insisting upon your own rights; you must be ready to waive them in certain circumstances, not having regard, at all costs, to your own interests, but also to the interests

¹ Compare St. Athanasius, ad Epict. 2; c. Apoll. i. 3.

² The Gifts of Civilisation, etc., p. 92.

of others." He might well say this, who had repeatedly waived his "right" to be maintained by his spiritual children. But he appeals to an infinitely more commanding, an infinitely more moving precedent. "Is it much to ask this of you, who owe everything to the self-abnegation of a Redeemer? Ought you not to be only too thankful for opportunities of doing, in your way, what He did for you in His?" What He did is thus taken as a pattern for their imitation; and what they are to do illustrates what He did. They are—not, indeed, to attempt the impossible, to try to sever themselves from what attaches to their own personality, but—to refrain from pressing their rights to the full, when thus to press them would be inconsistent with that "law of kindness" which repeatedly presents itself as a law of self-sacrifice. In this precept, then, we see a reflection of what St. Paul believed Christ to have done by the very fact of becoming man for men's salvation. That fact involved His acceptance, within the human sphere on which He thereby entered, of restrictions, of subjections, of obscurations, pertaining to the position of a "servant," as distinct from the position of a Son co-equal with the Father. In other words, it involved a "self-divesting" with reference to the "glory" which He might, had he so willed, have retained without qualification or limit. As Man, He willed to live compassed with sinless infirmities, and in dependence, as to His soul's life, on the word, the will, the presence of His Father,—a dependence, be it always remembered, not scenic, but genuine and actual; but this, when carried to its utmost point, could not require or

imply even a temporary abandonment of His properly Divine "manner of existence" outside the lines of His voluntary self-humiliation.

Expositors are now apparently agreed in treating the clause, οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ, as descriptive not of the Pre-existence, but of the Condescension.¹ The subsequent ἀλλ' is felt to make this necessary. The word ἀρπαγμός must therefore be taken not of an act of seizure, but of a thing seized, or to be seized: what, then, is it which is negated? On one view, it is primarily, that the co-equality was a thing which our Lord *had* usurped, and inferentially, that He could not, therefore, afford to waive it,—that He must, as it were, tenaciously clutch it, and insist upon the unqualified exercise of all that by right it gave Him. Practically, this is the view of St. Chrysostom; and Dr. Döllinger paraphrases, "He did *not* look on His equality with God as man jealously watches over property which he has stolen and is always fearing to be deprived of."² The other construction makes that primary which the former makes inferential, and renders ἀρπαγμόν as having a present purport, "a thing to be held fast as it were in a grasp," that is, to be insisted upon to all lengths and without any modification, or, "a means of self-aggrandisement" to be used without regard to others. Either way, there is some inevitable harshness; but the general result is the same. The Son might have declined to become in any sense "inferior to

¹ It is so understood in the "Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons," Euseb. v. 2. Cp. Origen c. Cels. vi. 15.

² First Age of the Church, E. T., p. 163.

the Father:" for love of man He did not so decline, but by becoming man became a "servant," and in that capacity did not display the majesty, nor exert all the powers, which belonged to Him inalienably as God.

The retention by our Lord, throughout His self-humiliation, of a real Divine existence and consciousness, along with, and distinct from, the human existence and consciousness which He had assumed, is forcibly illustrated by the following extracts from Dr. Dale's excellent treatise on "The Atonement:"—

"The Divine claims which sin resists, and the Divine rights which sin refuses to acknowledge, are essentially different from the claims and rights which are in such a sense personal that they can be remitted at pleasure. They are claims and rights which it is morally necessary that God should maintain. . . . God cannot be separated, even in idea, from the law " (*i.e.* "the eternal law of righteousness") "which has been violated, and which affirms the principle that sin deserves to be punished. Is it necessary, or is it not, that this principle should be asserted, and asserted by God Himself? If it is not asserted, if it is ignored and suppressed, then the eternal law of righteousness can be no longer perfectly identified with the will of God. . . . Such a separation . . . between the ideal law and the Divine will is impossible; God would cease to be God if His will were not a complete expression of all the contents of the eternal law of righteousness. Is it then inevitable that God should inflict the penalties which sin has deserved? . . . If the punishment of sin is a Divine act, an act in which the identity between the will of God

and the eternal law of righteousness is asserted and expressed, it would appear that if in any case the penalties of sin are remitted, some other Divine act of at least equal intensity, and in which the ill desert of sin is expressed with at least equal energy, must take its place . . . some Divine act which shall have all the moral significance of the act by which the penalties of sin would have been inflicted on the sinner. The Christian Atonement is the fulfilment of that necessity. . . . He through whose lips the sentence of the eternal law of righteousness must have come . . . He Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, laid aside His eternal glory, assumed our nature, was forsaken of God, died on the cross, that the sins of men might be remitted. It belonged to Him to assert, by His own act, that suffering is the just result of sin. He asserts it, not by inflicting suffering on the sinner, but by enduring suffering Himself. . . . The conscience will grasp the assurance that since the Moral Ruler and Judge of the human race has suffered, to whom it belonged to inflict suffering, it must be possible for Him to grant remission of sins."

It will be observed that, in the above statement, the "exinanition" is described as referring, not to our Lord's Divine existence as such, but to His Divine "glory,"—to that unqualified and absolute manifestation of His intrinsic majesty which would have been continuous but for His Condescension. The whole argument, and the subsequent repulse of the charge of "immorality" as really relevant to a very different hypothesis, implies that Christ, in the garden and on the Cross, existed alike "in the form of God" and in "the form of a servant." If

He had not a Divine existence when He thus submitted to all the anguish which His human existence had involved, He could not have been performing a "Divine act." Further, Dr. Dale argues that whereas man, by sin, had lost his true filial relation to God, its recovery was made possible through the ideal relation of the human race to Christ as the true "Son,"¹ and that He, "retaining . . . and revealing . . . the absolute perfection of His moral life, and the steadfastness of His eternal union with the Father," did in His death, preceded as it was by the "awful experience" of the "dereliction," "express the truth of that relation into which we had come through sin," and "not merely acknowledge that we deserved to suffer" its penalties, but "actually submit to the righteousness of the principle which those penalties express . . . and through our union with Him, His submission renders our submission possible." This brings out the theological significance of that—

"One word, the *Eli* twice wailed o'er—
'Tis anguish, but 'tis something more;
Mysteriously the whole world's sin,
His and not His, is blended in:"²

and it gives a real and adequate force to the Scriptural assertion that our sins were laid on Christ (compare 1 Pet. ii. 24 with LXX Isa. liii. 11, etc., and see Dale on the

¹ Here, however, some caution is necessary; we can hardly infer any special relation of Christ to the human race from the assertion of His general relation to all creation, and His special relation to angels, in Col. i. 15-17.

² Bp. Alexander, "St. Augustine's Holiday, and other Poems," p. 85.

Atonement, p. 459, that John i. 29 implies the same idea while emphasising that of the consequent removal of "the burden of sin").

It has, then, been truly said that while the N. T. teaching on the efficacy of Christ's Death employs such terms as "ransom," "propitiation," "reconciliation," but does not encourage us to press any one of them as representing the whole truth, nor to put and answer all the questions which they suggest if so treated, it does, in fact, supply us with three grounds, so to speak, for that efficacy: (1) The Divine dignity of the Sufferer's Person, which gave to His human sufferings an infinite merit and value; (2) the expression in them of the Divine law of righteousness; (3) His representative relation to the human race as the ideal Man, the One in whom the whole body was appropriately gathered up, so that, in that sense, St. Paul could say that Christ's love acted on him as a constraining motive for entire and loyal devotedness, because he had "attained the conviction that One died for all," and "therefore all died,"—that is, all men *potentially* shared in the effects of His death, which had for its object "that they who live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again,"—in other words, that they should *actually* assimilate those effects by a personal self-surrender, involving the realities of separation from sin and of vital conformity to the example and will of Christ. And of these three grounds, the first unquestionably implies the permanence of the *μορφὴ Θεοῦ* in the suffering and atoning Redecmer; "He was truly God, but He became as truly man, yet so as not to cease

in any respect being what He was before. . . . When He suffered, it was God suffering; not that the Divine Nature itself could suffer, any more than our soul can see or hear; but, as the soul sees and hears through the organs of the body, so God the Son suffered *in* that human nature which He had taken to Himself and made His own." And therefore "there was a virtue in His death, which there could be in no other, *for He was God.*"¹

It may be well, perhaps, by way of safeguard against Nestorian or Humanitarian tendencies, to put into more succinct form what seems ascertainable as to the *Kenôsis*. Our Lord's "self-divesting" must have been such, and of such an extent, as was involved in His assumption of "the form of a servant," *i.e.* of the essential characteristics of humanity, which He could not have assumed if He had "insisted on retaining" without qualification His condition of equality with God. But this assumption did not involve any surrender of the character of Godhead; for such surrender would have been (1) impossible, (2) needless, were it possible, for the purposes of His condescension, (3) directly adverse to those purposes. What he divested Himself of, then, must have been that unreserved exercise of Divine prerogatives which would be incompatible with the acceptance of the limitations attaching to humanity as He was to assume it. And those limitations must have been such as, while befitting His redemptive self-humiliation, could neither (1) involve His human will in the possibility of a revolt from the

¹ Newman, Sermon vi. 71.

will of the Father, which was one with His Divine will, nor (2) interfere with the full discharge of His function as the Prophet and Light of the world. In regard to this latter point, His human mind could receive, through ordinary human media, real accessions of knowledge; even during His ministry He could humanly ask for information on points which in no sense touched His Messianic office; on the very eve of His glorification, He did not humanly "know" the appointed time of His Second Advent. But it would be a strange inference that, because He was in this sense non-cognisant of some matters on which He did not affirm, He was therefore capable of error, and could mislead His hearers, on other matters on which He did affirm. Whatever He explicitly or implicitly *taught*, whether as to the kingdom of God, or the will of the Father, or His own unique claims, or the Scriptures which testified of Him, must have been the expression of a knowledge which flooded His mind with Divine light; He could not, without self-contradiction, have been either peccable as Man or fallible as Teacher.

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